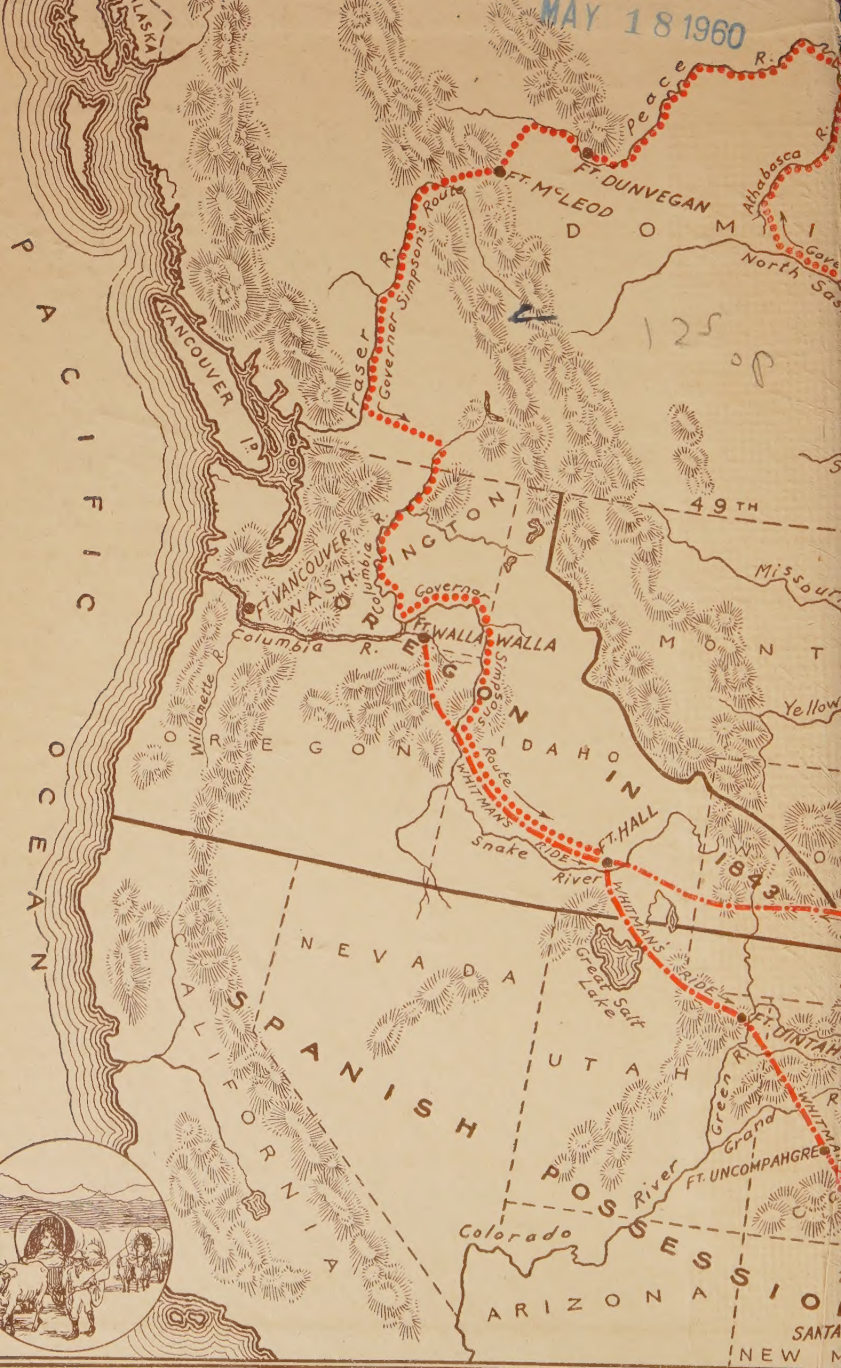
WE MUST MARCH

HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW

MAY 18 1960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INDIANA
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Canadian River
ARKANSAS
PURCHASE

WE MUST MARCH

WE MUST MARCH

A Novel of the Winning of Oregon

BY

HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW

Author of "The Enchanted Canyon," "The Devonshers," "Still Jim," etc.

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For we cannot tarry here,
We must march, my darlings, we must
bear the brunt of danger,
We, the youthful sinewy races, all the
rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!
—*Walt Whitman*

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EVANGELICAL
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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FOREWORD

This story of NARCISSA WHITMAN attempts to give an authentic picture of those heroic souls who played so vital a part in the early history of northwestern America. All the names and all the places are fact. As nearly as possible, after almost ninety years of careless time have blurred reports and accounts, the descriptions of persons and places have been drawn true to history. The background, the ways of living, thinking and talking, are, I believe, accurate, as are all the larger and more significant events.

The more I read of Narcissa and Marcus Whitman, of Jason Lee, of Sir George Simpson, of Dr. McLoughlin, the more I was convinced that their lives belonged not only to the historian but also to the writer of sagas; that while history could embody in permanent form, the stern facts that made great figures of these people, only the saga could hope to picture the beauty and the poignancy of the efforts and the sacrifices that made their plain, human souls heroic. And so I have tried to describe the pageant of their lives as history has thrown it up on the screen of my mind, which is the mind of a writer of fiction.

My main source of information has been Narcissa Whitman's Journal, published in a report of the Oregon Pioneer Association, in 1892, and my thanks are due the New York Public Library which permitted me to take a photo-stat copy of the Journal for my own use. I owe thanks, as well, to many historical writers on whom I have drawn freely for the purposes of the novel, particularly to Eva Emery Dye and her delightful chronicle of Dr. McLoughlin

and his associates. Following is a partial list of other books which I have studied.

The Story of the American Board, *W. E. Strong.*
How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon, *O. W. Nixon.*
McLoughlin and Old Oregon, *Eva Emery Dye.*
Marcus Whitman, *W. A. Mowry.*
Frémont and '49, *F. S. Dellenbaugh.*
Handbook of American Indian, *Bureau of Ethnology.*
Songs of Old Canada, *Collection.*
History of Old Oregon, *W. H. Gray.*
The American Commonwealth, *James Bryce.*
New Indian Sketches, *P. J. DeSmet.*
Memoirs of My Life, *John Charles Frémont.*
The Columbia River, *W. D. Lyman.*
Overland Journey Round the World, *Sir George Simpson.*
Life and Letters, *Sir George Simpson.*
Oregon Missions, *P. J. DeSmet.*
Ex. Document No. 30, Senate 41st Congress, 1st Session, 1871.
California and Oregon Trail, *Francis Parkman.*
History of the Oregon Missions, *H. K. Hines.*
History of the United States, *George Bancroft.*
The Whitman Controversy, *G. H. Himes.*
Essays in Historical Criticism, *E. G. Bourne.*
Marcus Whitman, *M. G. Wells.*
Thirty Years' View, *Thomas H. Benton.*
Oregon, the Struggle for Possession, *William Barrows.*
River of the West, *F. F. Victor.*
Life and Letters of Daniel Webster, *F. Webster.*
Letters and Times of the Tylers, *L. G. Tyler.*

H. W. M.

WE MUST MARCH

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CHAPTER I

THE GOVERNOR OF RUPERT'S LAND

IT was late in May, 1836. Winter, at last, had released its hold on Rupert's Land and the Peace River country was open to travel. A wide land, of indescribable grandeur and of indescribable loneliness was this early Canada, with only the far-flung posts of the Hudson's Bay Company to give evidence that white men had explored it.

But, widely separated and sparsely manned though they were, these posts controlled the destinies of the Indians, who roamed the wilderness; controlled them peacefully and sent to England, every year, the priceless packs of fur traded by them for goods from the Hudson's Bay Company.

So vast had grown the Company's business, so difficult was it made by the isolation of the posts, so complicated and delicate had become the task of handling the men who manned the posts and the Indians who traded with them, so important in the governmental plans of Great Britain had the administration of Rupert's Land grown to be, that only a man of mark could be appointed by the Company as Governor of Rupert's Land.

Such a man was Governor Simpson, who, on this last day of May, 1836, was mid-flight on his annual inspection trip of posts. He had been at Fort Dunvegan, on Peace River, for two days, inspecting books and holding court. And having finished, late at night, he strode out of the stockade, shortly after dawn, in a perfect fury of impatience.

He was about five feet seven in height, and powerfully built, with the sandy complexion and gray eyes of a Scotchman. He was smooth shaven and his chin, above the black stock and ruffled shirt, was aggressive and stubborn. He wore a high, gray beaver hat, a blue broadcloth cape and polished riding boots. When he appeared in the open gateway, the two bagpipe players, in kilts, who stood beside the bright red canoe began skirling "Bonnie Dundee."

"Silence, fools!" roared the Governor. Then, as the musicians stopped, abashed, he turned to one of the men, who had followed him through the gate. "Don't presume to argue with me longer, James! They were due here the day before yesterday. I must go on without my dispatches."

"But only two days off schedule, Governor! What do you expect in Rupert's Land?" demanded the tall, Scotch factor, in no wise perturbed. "Do you think this is stage coaching, in England?"

"No, sirrah! I think it is wretched express work, over a route I, myself, have covered promptly, to the moment!" shouted Governor Simpson. "You've been with the Hudson's Bay Company for twenty years, James, and—"

"Twenty-one years, Governor," interrupted the factor, "and in that time I've learned the lesson of the wilderness. Patience! Patience!"

"Patience!" snorted the Governor, striding toward the canoe. "'Twas the curse of the Hudson's Bay Company for a hundred years, until the Nor'westers showed us a clean pair of heels and threatened to wipe the fur trade out of Rupert's Land. You are an admirable factor, James, but your meals never are served on time, nor— Be Gad! What's that?" pointing down the river.

All eyes, as well as ears, had been concentrated on the Governor, who was greater than a king, in Rupert's Land. At his sudden gesture to the north, musicians, voyageurs, Indians and clerks, all turned to stare over the dancing blue

waters of the wide stream. A canoe was approaching, cutting diagonally across the wind, which blew taut the flag of England at her stern. There were eight men, paddling, and the boat traveled toward the settlement with astounding rapidity. And faintly, as the figures of the paddlers became more distinct, the sound of a familiar song reached the shore.

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
But when will he return?"

A voyageur, standing beside the Governor's canoe, suddenly jerked off his coonskin cap by the tail, and waved it, shouting at the top of his lungs:

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!"

Awe of their great visitor, which had held the crowd silent, melted into thin air, as with waving caps, it joined in the song. After all, this *was* the Montreal Express, the yearly event of paramount interest in Rupert's Land.

The canoe, a bright scarlet, swept into shallow water. As one man, the voyageurs leaped into the stream and ran it lightly to the shore. One of them, a tall, grizzled man, in fringed and elaborately beaded deerskin, strode up to Governor Simpson.

"Deespatch, Sar!" he said, pulling out from the breast of his tunic, a thin packet, wrapped in oilskin.

"Will you return to the office, Governor, and read away from this hubbub?" asked the factor.

From the moment he had sighted the Express, the blood had been receding from the Governor's face. He took the dispatch with a friendly nod to the French voyageur, and turned to the factor.

"Thank you, James," he replied, urbanely. "I'll read the letter here, and unless it needs immediate attention, I'll start at once."

He undid the packet as he spoke. It contained but a single letter. The Governor tossed the wrapping to his secretary, a slender young man, who stood nearby, obviously keenly amused by the whole scene, tore open the seal and began to read.

The chief factor, with a murmured excuse, turned to speak to the head voyageur, leaving the Governor and his secretary alone beside the mooring post. The Governor looked up from the letter.

"'Tis from our minister to the United States, John," he said in a troubled voice. "There is a new menace. That American missionary, Jason Lee, whom Dr. McLoughlin, in 1834, permitted, against my advice, to settle in Oregon—you will remember he is established on the Willamette River, south of Fort Vancouver?—that missionary, on whom the Hudson's Bay Company, through McLoughlin, has heaped favor after favor, and to whom it has given protection, has written a report to the Congress, so full of praise of Oregon territory, that the Congress has sent round to the Pacific a naval brig, bearing an American named Slacum, who is to investigate Jason Lee's report. The minister believes that Slacum is now with Lee."

Young John Leslie's blue eyes snapped. "Slacum must be sent back!" he exclaimed.

"But how?" cried the Governor, the blood flushing back again to his forehead. "I can make better speed than the Express and even I cannot hope to reach Fort Vancouver before August. Heaven only knows what Dr. McLoughlin will do for the man!"

"Dr. McLoughlin is loyal to the Company, I'm sure," declared John.

"So am I sure of that! But he is oversure of his own

power and that of the Hudson's Bay Company. He condescends too much! I tell you, I'm afraid of these missionaries! And as if Messrs. Lee and Slacum were not menace enough, this letter tells me that four more missionaries are on their way to Oregon, overland, this time. They left New York State in March. Be Gad, they shall not settle in Oregon! After the missionary comes the plow, as I've warned McLoughlin, repeatedly. Let them settle elsewhere. There are millions of acres to the south, in the Louisiana Purchase, crying for settlement. But no! Nothing will suit these American missionaries but Oregon. And Oregon shall belong to England and the Hudson's Bay Company, as I'm a man!"

The Governor's aggressive lower jaw thrust itself forward, his clear, gray eyes contracted, as he stared at his secretary.

"But, sir, Captain Thing, I've heard, has made an excellent record at Fort Hall. He has deflected all overland settlers into California. They say there's a dozen deserted wagons lying about his stockade. He's persuaded every American who has come as far as Fort Hall, that it is impossible to take a wagon westward over the five hundred miles between Fort Hall and the Columbia. Certainly, you can trust him to turn back these four missionaries."

"If it were trappers, I'd have every confidence in Thing," replied Governor Simpson. "But these are missionaries, Protestant missionaries, and the armies of Her Majesty couldn't stop them, once they are persuaded they must save souls." He took a turn or two up and down the sandy shore, then, squaring his great chest, he exclaimed, "I shall turn them back, myself! This business of inspection shall be reduced to a minimum. I will hold no court proceedings until my return trip. Where's James?"

The young secretary hurried after the factor, who was watching the unloading of the express canoe.

"I'm away, James!" cried the Governor, shaking hands, heartily. "I'll see you, on my return trip, next spring. Come, John."

The two canoes of the Governor's brigade, each manned by eight voyageurs, were drawn to the landing. Governor Simpson, John Leslie and the bagpipe players entered the first canoe and it swung out into the stream. The second canoe, loaded with luggage and the camping outfit, received the two buglers and paddled close to the stern of the first boat. The musicians struck up "Bonnie Prince Charlie," the crowd on shore cheered, the Governor and his secretary waved their handkerchiefs and a moment later were lost to sight behind a curve in the river.

For a long half hour after the music had ceased and the voyageurs had settled to the heavy task of paddling the canoes upstream, Governor Simpson sat in silence, scowling heavily, as was his wont when deep in thought. Finally, he turned to young Leslie.

"I'll have out the map, John. We must remake our schedule."

The two were seated, side by side, on the floor of the canoe. Leslie spread on their knees a parchment of Rupert's Land and the little known territory of Oregon. The Governor pointed, with a well cared for finger.

"We'll not stop but a day at Fort St. John. We must reach the Pass in a week's time. God help them at Fort McLeod if they have not our horses ready for us, for I intend to embark on the Columbia River by the first of July. And look you, John, my lad, this is no child's play you are undertaking. The Pass through the Rocky Mountains will be full of snow, and every man must carry pack. Even when we are over the Rockies, still the forests are wild and there are no roads and we'll sweat blood in making the speed I shall require. Fraser River will help, but there'll be many a long portage before we reach the Columbia.

Once we reach the Columbia, we'll make a hundred and fifty miles a day till we reach the Snake. We'll go as far as we can on the Snake, then horses again, to Fort Hall, three hundred miles to the southeast."

John, who was beginning to find his maiden trip into Rupert's Land decidedly impressive, looked from the parchment to the Governor.

"You must fear these missionaries, very much, sir!"

"I fear what they presage, John. Monique!" he called to the head voyageur, seated high in the prow. "Monique, a shilling extra to every man and two to yourself, for every day cut off the two weeks between here and Fort McLeod. There's a great danger threatening the Company's interests in the Oregon territory, Monique, a danger that I can avert only if I can reach Fort Hall before the first of August."

Monique, his half-breed face, saturnine in the brilliant sun, turned and called a long order back to the second canoe. Instantly, the tempo of the paddling in both boats quickened and the Governor, sitting, tensely, arms folded, eyes dark, gave a grunt of satisfaction.

The Governor's tensity infected the whole brigade. The French half-breeds, those greatest boatmen in the world, threw themselves with enthusiasm into establishing a new record for speed over the trackless way where, for years, they had been performing miracles of swift going. These voyageurs, composing the Governor's crew, were picked men; the best of an extraordinarily efficient lot. Chosen not only because they deserved the highest honor in their calling—that of belonging to the brigade of the Governor of Rupert's Land—but also, because Governor Simpson always had been afflicted by a mania for speed that never could be satisfied. As Factor James had suggested, he seemed to look upon the terrible trails that ran hither and yon across Rupert's Land, from Hudson's Bay to the Pa-

cific, as one might look upon the famous turnpikes of Old England, where stage coaches ran upon the minute. His annual tours of inspection were prodigies of celerity.

Yet, impatient as Simpson had always been of any delay, eager as he always had been that the paddles should move faster and yet faster, Monique caught in the Governor's new demand a note of real anxiety and he rose to meet it, gamely.

The hours in camps, between forts, were cut to the minimum. The speed on the rivers, and over the portages, impossible as it seemed, was doubled. The time allotted to each post inspection was cut in half. Only on one point did Simpson insist on no elimination. None of the pomp or ceremony of his expedition was dropped. He made his elaborate daily toilet. His meals were served, in courses, and with wine. Before sighting each post, both crews must pause and furbish themselves up with their best beaded and fringed clothing. The musicians must strike up, and, as the seven guns, saluting the governor, sounded from the post, all must join in singing Simpson's favorite song, "Malbrouck has gone a-fighting!"

Thus with pomp and speed, with each day adding curiously to the Governor's anxiety, the little brigade swept up the Peace River. It toiled with unbelievable difficulty through the passes of the Rockies, Simpson and his secretary on horseback and the men afoot, laden like pack mules. They rushed upon Fort McLeod, demanding horses, and, the business of inspection scantily attended to, were off to the Fraser River.

The examination of the Company's books, the punishing of the Company's criminals, might well wait. For George Simpson knew, better than any man in Rupert's Land, better even than the Company's most brilliant chief factor, Dr. McLoughlin, in Oregon territory, exactly how great was the threat behind the simple fact that four more mission-

aries, *two of them women,* were crossing the Rockies, to the Columbia.

For, before George Simpson was a Hudson's Bay employee, he was a Briton, and a Briton with most distinguished blood in his veins. He saw the Hudson's Bay Company in the large. He saw it not merely as a trading corporation of great wealth and prestige. It was, in his broad view, one of the most potent means by which the British Empire was moving westward, across the world.

It was a bitter truth that the American colonies had slipped away from England, and with them a great slice of American continent. But Oregon still remained and California. *These must belong to England.* And as long as the Hudson's Bay Company could maintain that vast region surrounding the Columbia as a fur preserve, for its own interests, it was maintaining it for the British Empire.

Settlers must not come into the Oregon territory! Settlers would not come, unless they could bring their women folk. And two missionary men with their wives were, at this moment, headed for the Columbia River. No white woman ever had crossed the Rockies. Employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, in Oregon country, were married to half-breed women. These missionaries must not be permitted to demonstrate to the United States that white women could enter the Columbia country and thrive there.

Simpson was no fool. He knew that the movement westward, to the Pacific coast, of American citizens, was inevitable. But he believed that the tide could be held back until the ignorant and indifferent American government had sold or traded its share in the marvelous Oregon territory to Great Britain. And he had no illusion as to the difficulty of bringing about delay. For here, the British were not dealing with French, nor with Russians, nor with the Hindu. Here, it was the men of Great Britain fighting men of their own blood and of their own colonizing traditions: blood and

traditions that had produced the greatest colonizers the world had known.

Sitting taut in the bottom of his canoe, his eyes aching as the brilliant waters reflected into his face, or bending low in his saddle as his horse wallowed through the eternal snows of the mountain passes, watching the rows of buffalo ribs roasting for his dinner before the evening fire, or wearily following the fur lists, in the candlelight, at some factor's desk, Simpson thought of these things. Thought of them as men think of their most terrible and personal responsibility, with a quick intake of breath, a setting of the jaw, a stiffening of the shoulders to the forward push! Nay, with this man, there was even more than personal obligation. There was the urge of the blood within him; a sense of *noblesse oblige,* that made England's desires and England's problems his.

"Monique! A little faster, for a time. And, pipers, give me a song."

And obediently, through the everlasting reaches of the forest skirled the old ballad:

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!"

CHAPTER II

THE HORSE CANOE

ABOUT the time that Governor Simpson was embarking on the Fraser River, there was a mighty stir, in a great camp on the banks of the Green River, in what is now eastern Wyoming. It was a curious camp, utterly lacking in the orderliness that prevailed about the Hudson's Bay Company's posts.

This camp was the "Rendezvous" of the American Fur Trading Company. The crude log hut, which served the Company as a store, was surrounded by the tents of perhaps a hundred and fifty traders, French and American. Each trader's tent was his castle, in which he lived an embattled existence, guarding his belongings not only from the Indians but from other trappers and traders. Scattered at intervals along the banks of the river, were the camps of different Indians, Nez Percés, Flatheads, Snakes, each with a carefully maintained guard against other tribes and against the predatory Americans, the "Bostons" as they were called, to differentiate them from the English and Scotch.

There was plenty of whiskey in the "Rendezvous." Most of the traders and trappers were temporarily married to Indian wives. There was much wild sport; gun play and horse racing, and an infinite deal of bickering and fighting. Remotely, above the camp, lay the exquisite blue of the western sky. In every direction about the wide valley, wherein the Fur Company grazed its tired pack horses, stretched the vivid orange and red of canyon and butte and the threatening peaks of the Rockies.

It was into this camp that there rode, on the fifteenth of July, with a convoy of fur traders, the four missionaries, with their secular agent.

It was late in the afternoon when they reached the "Rendezvous" and began to make their camp at some distance from the trading store. The three men of the party were given only casual scrutiny by the men and squaws, lounging about their tents. But when, out of the covered wagon which had been jerked into camp by a tired pair of mules, there emerged the two missionary wives, a sudden shout swept up the river bank.

"White women, by God! White!"

There was a sudden rush for the newcomers' camp. Battered hats and fur caps were pulled from heads to which the gesture had become a forgotten thing, and a man cried:

"Welcome, ladies! You're the first white women in this part of the world."

"The first white women I've seen in twenty-seven years!" cried another voice. "Shake hands with us!"

The two women standing beside the wagon were an interesting contrast to each other. The taller one was Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, daughter of Judge Stephen Prentiss, of Angelica, New York. She was about twenty-eight years of age, tall and of noble proportions and bearing. She was fair, with long braids of yellow hair wrapped round her head. Her eyes were a light blue and her features were very regular, almost Greek, in their chiseled purity of outline. She was wearing a dark blue riding habit. The waist fitted her beautiful torso without a wrinkle and the skirt, flowing in the gracious lines of the fashion of that day, added a majesty to her tall figure that almost dwarfed the woman standing beside her.

This woman was Eliza Spalding, the daughter of a farmer in Herkimer County, New York. She was a frail, dark person, with blunt, heavy features, of so plain a cast

that even the deep kindliness expressed in eye and lip could not lessen the impression of homeliness she made. She wore a riding habit, badly made, of gray wool, and a sunbonnet pushed back from her dark hair.

As the two women stood smiling, Dr. Marcus Whitman, laughing heartily, came to their rescue and introduced them, with a broad gesture of his sunburned hand. Whitman was a physician, a native of Rushville, New York, about thirty-five years of age, tall and compactly built. He wore a ragged deerskin coat and trousers and frayed leather riding boots. He was smooth shaven, his hair a light brown, his eyes blue and extraordinarily clear and keen. His face was of the New England type, thin, with rather high cheek bones, a long, clean jaw line and a broad forehead that thrust well forward over his eyes. His lips were thin, but mobile, with sensitive corners and his nose was straight and well cut.

"This is my wife, gentlemen," he cried, "and this is Mrs. Spalding, wife of my fellow worker, the Reverend Henry Spalding. There he is yonder, with William Gray, our secular agent. Come here, Henry, and make your manners to the crowd!"

Henry Spalding came forward, slowly. He was about the doctor's age, clad in somber black, a thin, stoop-shouldered man, with a bald head and a skin prematurely wrinkled. He bowed solemnly, while William Gray, the jovial, blue-eyed young man beside him cried, with a grin that showed every white tooth:

"Sorry I haven't a wife also, to present to you, gentlemen!"

The introductions began a long evening's ordeal for the two women. The rough trappers were hungry for a word with these two human beings who brought back to them all of gentleness and sweetness they ever had known. The Indians, braves and squaws alike, were devoured by curi-

osity; and the missionaries had, finally, to set a laughing guard about the camp fire, before which Mrs. Whitman and Mrs. Spalding sat. The Indians then turned from their contemplation of the white women to a minute examination of the wagon. Few of them ever had seen one before and this "horse canoe" as they called it, was as remarkable to them as were Mrs. Whitman's white skin and golden hair.

The errand which had brought the two women to the Rockies was discussed vociferously about the camp fire. The consensus of opinion was that they could not get beyond Fort Hall.

"The Honorable Hudson's Bay Company ain't encouraging any Americans to trade on the Columbia," declared an old trapper who lacked an eye. "And as for letting white women through—why, white women means homes and farms! You'll never pass Fort Hall."

"Oh, yes, we shall!" Dr. Whitman, standing beside the fire, spoke grimly. "The ladies and the wagon are going to the Columbia."

A great guffaw of laughter rose. Then the one-eyed trapper spoke again. "We're for your getting the ladies across the mountain, but, man, you just can't get the wagon over! There ain't any trails and the route you've come is baby play compared with what's before you."

Dr. Whitman looked at his watch and yawned. "Bed time, friends! Seems that I'll need all my strength in the next month! You see," he added, as his audience stared at him, "I've been argued with about that wagon ever since we left Fort Laramie. I've heard every argument that can be conceived, mostly about the horrors of what I'll find beyond Fort Hall. Now, I want to tell you men, that at times, since we left Fort Laramie, I've almost carried that wagon on my back, and by the eternals, if it's necessary, after we pass Fort Hall, I'll carry the mules and the wagon too!"

Cheers mingled with the laughter that greeted this sally and the crowd stared from the doctor to the lone wagon, on which the firelight rose and fell. Its canvas top was green with mildew and yellow with dust and forlorn with rents and patches.

"I'm not boasting about it as a thing of beauty!" exclaimed Dr. Whitman. "But if it will accomplish the task I've set it, I can do without looks. It's going to prove to the world that, *right now,* wagons, with women folks and household furniture can go through to the Columbia."

"Can't be done, Doctor!" insisted several voices.

"That's what I keep telling him," cried Henry Spalding. "That wagon is a terrible nuisance. He's no right to hold us all back, just to satisfy a foolish whim."

Narcissa Whitman rose and took her husband's arm. "I suppose I ought to be thankful we've not two wagons," she said with a little laugh. "Perhaps it is foolish of him, but I want to tell you all that he's been wonderful about that terrible old wagon, wonderful! So patient, so unwearying! I'm proud of him!" She looked into the doctor's face with an expression so loyal that one of the trappers exclaimed:

"Lord, Doctor, but you are lucky!"

The one-eyed trapper took a huge bite of tobacco. "What I got to say, Doc, is that your wife must be terrible romantic, a lady like her to marry a rough and ready chap like you!"

Dr. Whitman patted Narcissa's beautiful hand, as it lay on his coat sleeve, and burst into a great guffaw of laughter. The crowd joined him and under its cover the missionaries went off to bed.

The following day was spent in resting the saddle and pack horses, the mules, and the eight or ten cows that belonged to the mission outfit. The missionaries had planned to go on alone into the Rockies, for the American Fur convoy would go no farther west. There was considerable danger in this, for although no Indians were on the war-

path, there was not the friendly relationship between the "Bostons" and the Indians that there was between the Hudson's Bay Company employees and the Indians. A small party of Americans, containing women, would be a great temptation to marauding braves. And for murder or robbery of "Bostons" there was no avenging Dr. McLoughlin or Captain Thing.

The Whitman party was unabashed by the recital of all these facts, but Dr. Whitman, as leader of the expedition, anxiously examined, with William Gray, the meager supply of firearms carried in the Conestoga wagon. They were busy at this, when two men rode into the camp and introduced themselves as Thomas McKay and John McLeod, factors of the Hudson's Bay Company, on business with the American Fur Traders.

They were bearded Scotchmen, extremely courteous of manner, and they invited the missionaries to join their small convoy, leaving on the morrow for Fort Hall. Marcus accepted with alacrity, a little puzzled, it is true, by the unexpected gesture, but none the less grateful.

While the two factors stood chatting with his wife, the doctor turned to William Gray.

"That doesn't seem to agree with what every one's been telling us," he said.

Young Gray stared, with bright blue eyes, at the Scotchmen. "I fear the Greeks, bearing gifts!" he said. "We'll put it to the attractiveness of Mrs. Whitman, however. I suppose they've got half-breed wives, too. Lord, their stomachs must be strong!"

No one was inclined to be too curious about the invitation. Even the marked coldness that existed between the Scotchmen and the American traders did not trouble the missionaries much.

The march began early, the next morning, and pushed steadily onward into the fastnesses of the Rockies. The

people of the Hudson's Bay Company were in no hurry and, had it not been for the exhausting demands of the wagon, which increased, day by day, as they neared Fort Hall, Marcus would have enjoyed the leisurely journey as much as Narcissa did. Slowly, they crossed what is now Wyoming, through the South Pass, down into unspeakable canyons, over mountains that scratched the heavens, until, on an afternoon of late July, they emerged from the fastnesses of a barren range, in what is now eastern Idaho and saw before them the valley of the Port Neuf and Snake rivers. Wonderful rivers, it seemed to them, with their border of cottonwood timber making an unbelievable contrast to the burning ranges and plateau that hemmed the valley all about. The gleaming white walls of Fort Hall lay across the valley to the northwest.

The main body of the pack train forded the Port Neuf with the usual commotion: the shrill protests of horses and cattle, the barking of dogs, the cursing of men. It was not until the train was a slender spiral moving along the valley toward the fort that the last man of the outfit emerged from the pass in the eastern mountains and paused on the bank of the stream. It was Dr. Whitman, left to struggle alone with his emaciated mules and the only wagon in the convoy.

The mules endeavored to lie down in harness. The doctor shouted at them, then stood for a long moment, studying the stream. He examined the rough trail, left by the pack train, down the steep drop of two hundred feet to the river bed, then walked over to the wagon and inspected it thoroughly. Ragged, mildewed and paintless, it still looked sturdy enough for travel. Marcus nodded with satisfaction, drew a heavy pole from beneath the canvas and ran it through the two rear wheels, then mounted to the springless front seat. He lifted the reins and shouted to the mules:

"Hi, Jennie! Up, Jewell!" The black whip cracked over the bony necks.

The mules kicked viciously at the whippletrees and lunged violently over the edge of the bank. The wagon immediately skidded into their heels. The mules squealed, kicked and fought to turn to the left to avoid the thrust of the Conestoga, but Dr. Whitman, leaning far back under the canvas to maintain his balance on the steep incline, held them firmly with the rope reins, and mules and wagon lunged heavily downward, the wagon twisting and turning, now shoving against the mules, now turned half around, dragging the mules off their feet, now stalling against a giant boulder, while the mules hung by the dilapidated harness over the rushing stream. One of these hangups occurred perhaps fifty feet above the water and the doctor was obliged to descend from the seat and, with the reins caught over his shoulder, pry the front wheels free from the crevice in which they had lodged. When, with a mighty heave of his great back, he had accomplished this, he made a jump for the wagon seat. But he was not quick enough to accomplish his design, for the wagon, the instant it was freed, skidded violently downward, carrying with it the kicking, biting mules and the man, dragging by the reins over his shoulders. They landed in an indiscriminate heap in the roaring stream.

Fortunately, the water was not above three feet deep. Dr. Whitman struggled to his feet, clothes streaming, face bleeding, and rushed to disentangle the mules from the harness and from the wagon top which they were rapidly demolishing. This accomplished,—strangely enough in this part of the world, without oaths,—he righted the wagon, which was lying on its side, rescued a small trunk which had slid out into the water, reharnessed the mules, climbed again into the wagon seat and called above the roar of the current:

"Hi, Jennie! Get up, Jewell!"

The mules began a mad scramble across the rocky river bed. The current was strong and though it could not carry them off their feet, it deflected them downstream and, in spite of the doctor's immense efforts, brought them across the river at a point where gravel gave way to mud. Here, in six inches of water, the wagon sank to the hubs and the mules to their bellies.

The sun was now setting. The bank of the river, on this side, not over fifty feet high, threw the floundering team into deep shadow. But the cottonwoods above were silhouetted against pure gold. Silhouetted, too, suddenly appeared the figure of a woman on horseback, who stared silently for a moment on Dr. Whitman who had tossed blankets out from the wagon and was crawling on them slowly, toward a bed of dried rushes. It was Narcissa. She waited until he had thrown a dozen armloads of reeds in front of the trembling mules before she spoke:

"Marcus! Shall I go back for help?"

The doctor, crouching on the sodden blankets, looked up. Narcissa, outlined against the sky, might have been a goddess, with her blond hair, her fine shoulders, her splendid, lilting voice.

"You must be half dead, Marcus! Will you rest while I go back for Miles Goodyear or an Indian?"

Marcus shook his head. "You couldn't get any one, Narcissa. I've worn my welcome out with this wagon."

"Oh, leave the miserable thing, dear!" exclaimed Narcissa. "It's killing you and it's estranging you from all the others."

Marcus shook his head and proceeded to throw another armload of rushes on the path he was making between the mules and the solid ground, ten feet beyond. Narcissa slid from her horse and, leaving him nibbling at cottonwood leaves, made her way down the bank.

"If you'll toss me the reins," she said, "I can tug at the mules to better advantage than you."

Marcus followed her suggestion, then set his shoulder to the rear of the wagon. There followed a long half hour of breathless endeavor, during which Narcissa tugged and called, while the pitiful, dumb brutes trembled and fought for foothold, and Marcus lifted until blood gushed from his congested fingertips. But at last, just as dusk crept under the bank, mules and wagon drew free of the dragging mud and Marcus pulled the dripping blankets to dry ground and threw himself, panting, beside the recumbent team.

"Marcus Whitman!" exclaimed Narcissa, "another month of this will kill you!"

Marcus wiped his dripping face on his deerskin sleeve. He did not seem to find an adequate return for his wife's comment, for he said after a moment, "Where's the camp to-night?"

"Just outside the fort. The factor, Captain Thing, has asked us missionaries in, for supper. I came back to tell you that. Marcus, leave the wagon and the mules under the cottonwoods here, to-night. You can easily get them in the morning. The road is so soft up to the fort that the going will be too much for them, tired as they are now. I brought your horse back with me."

"Did you, Narcissa? Well, you're good to me, even if you do think I'm a fool about the wagon." Marcus rose stiffly and began to unhitch the mules. When he had done this and had hobbled them, he followed Narcissa slowly up the bank. Here there was still afterglow. By its light, Marcus made a desultory attempt to scrape the mud from his clothes, then mounted and followed his wife, whose horse already was cantering toward the fort.

The red gleam of a dozen camp fires marked the site of the camp. As the two rode closer, a single tent became

visible in the murky light and it was before this that they dismounted.

"I suppose the others have gone into the fort," said Narcissa. "You'll find your other tunic in your bed roll, Marcus. I'll get you a pail of water while you take off that mess. You are nothing unusual as a physician, Marcus,"—she chuckled as the firelight disclosed the disheveled condition of her husband—"but you'd make a wonderful chimney sweep! Do hurry, dear!"

Marcus dragged his weary body into the tent. "I suppose I ought to be thankful you don't make me get into my black broadcloth," he groaned, as Narcissa returned with a pail of water. "This going out to dinner, this society life, Narcissa—"

"I know, poor dear," agreed his wife. "Let's see, the last time we ate at a table was at Fort Laramie! That is, only once, since we left Westport!"

"That was once too much," grumbled Marcus, wiping his face and obediently taking the comb Narcissa handed him. "Whew! I feel ready for food! I wonder what we'll have. Hope the others will leave a bite for us."

The others had had, it proved, no opportunity to do otherwise. For Captain Thing, with English punctilio, did not order the meal served until the Whitmans appeared in the doorway. Then he nodded at an inquiring head that evidently belonged to the cook, and came forward to greet the last arrivals with a manner that belonged to London and not to this crude and tiny fastness of the wilderness.

"Mrs. Whitman, I am John Thing, the factor here. And Dr. Whitman! I am glad you've not been injured, as Mr. Spalding feared you might be. We'll sit down to dinner at once."

He bowed them to the crude bare table, with its single candle competing with the stars that glimmered through the

wide opening in the roof. Chairs of split logs, covered with buffalo skins, a fireplace on which cottonwood blazed, a medley of saddles and riding boots in dusky corners, filled a room devoid of comfort, yet which to the missionaries seemed almost luxurious after their terrible journey from the States.

The dinner, though served on wooden plates and in tin cups, was a treat to people who had lived for weeks on dried buffalo meat and nothing else. It consisted of turnips and buffalo stew, bread fried in buffalo fat, with "trapper's butter,"—the marrow drawn from buffalo bones,—and tea.

"We were very grateful for the privilege of traveling with a Hudson's Bay Company's convoy," said Narcissa, when the bustle of serving the meal had subsided. "Are the Indians, here, seriously hostile to Americans?"

"They are to many of the men of the American Fur Trading Company," replied Captain Thing.

"How do you account for that?" asked young Gray.

"The American Fur Trading Company has no clean-cut, sane policy for handling the Indians," replied the factor. "The Hudson's Bay Company has."

"And what is that policy?" demanded Henry Spalding, abruptly. "If it's not unchristian in its tenets, we may want to use it."

Captain Thing raised his blond eyebrows. "It's not possible that you've come to live among the Indians without a settled 'modus vivendi'?"

"We have one. It's found in the teachings of Christ!" declared Marcus.

The Englishman shook his head. "It won't work!" Then, with a little smile at the shocked faces of his guests, he went on, "You see, it has been necessary for the Hudson's Bay Company to operate without an army, in a huge territory. So it has been necessary for the Company's servants to possess certain qualities. One thing all Indians

fear is fearlessness. So a factor or trader must have iron nerve. He must accompany justice with sternness. For example, it's the universal custom among Indians to demand a life for a life. You must make the same demand of them. Blood pays for blood. Sometimes a factor or a clerk will enter an Indian camp alone, shoot a known murderer and walk away, while respect holds the Indians from protest. White man's justice, thus administered, is as powerful as superstition among the Indians."

"How horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Spalding.

"I know!" agreed Captain Thing, "but you must realize that you are going to live among people utterly devoid of our ideas of decent conduct. Their idea of sportsmanship begins and ends with providing a scalp-lock on their own heads for the enemies' hand hold! I tell you that if you go among them with the 'turn the other cheek' policy, instead of 'an eye for an eye' you will sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. I very much fear . . ." Captain Thing stopped short, then looked at the two women, before saying tersely to the doctor, "You are a fool to take women into such a situation!"

"The Lord is our fortress!" said Eliza Spalding.

"The Lord protects those who protect themselves," retorted Captain Thing, sharply.

"If we settle near one of the Hudson's Bay Company posts, I don't see what we have to fear," declared young Gray, coolly. "Your policy with the Indians should protect us. But what about the policy you don't mention? Haven't you had orders from headquarters, to keep Americans out of the Columbia River country? Don't you turn them back or south from here, by telling them the mountains west of here are impassable?"

"It is impassable for settlers," said Thing. "My suggestion is that you settle near the Green River 'Rendezvous.'"

Marcus shook his head. "No, it was the Flathead Indians

who sent delegates to St. Louis two years ago, asking for Christian teachers and to the Flathead country we are going."

"There is only the merest apology for a trail," said Captain Thing. "You'll never get your wagon through."

"I'll have a try at it," returned Marcus, dryly.

"There's no heading him off, Captain!" ejaculated Henry Spalding bitterly. "That wagon is more important to him than his friends."

The clergyman was entirely out of patience. The trip, in fact, was getting on his nerves. He was an excellent preacher, but he was no pioneer and the wagon had become the last straw, added to the many discomforts of the journey. Ever since leaving Westport, in what is now Missouri, the unfortunate vehicle had held them back. It had become the bête noir on which Spalding vented the spleen accruing from all his weariness and suffering during the trip.

Dr. Whitman laughed. "How familiar it all sounds! We've certainly worn our welcome out, old lady Conestoga and I. Even Miles Goodyear went back on me to-day, the last prop I had to lean on! But we came through, the wagon and I."

"Miles has reached the parting of the ways!" Narcissa smiled. "He says if the wagon goes on, he stays at Fort Hall."

"And who is this possible guest of mine?" asked the factor.

"A youngster who joined us near Fort Leavenworth," replied Narcissa. "A runaway of sixteen. He earned his way by helping the doctor with his wagon. But it's killing work and he's little more than a child. If he does refuse to go on with us, Captain, I wish you would look out for him."

"I'd like to see him, before I make any promises," said

the factor. "A boy that age could be very useful here, but only if he is of the sort who will lend himself to discipline."

"Let's have him in now!" exclaimed young Gray. Then, in answer to the inquiring looks of the rest of the party, "The wagon has got on Spalding's nerves, but it's Miles who's got on mine. He's harder to feed and care for than all our outfit, including the mules!"

Captain Thing laughed heartily and sent a servant to hunt up Miles Goodyear. Shortly there appeared in the doorway a boy who scarcely looked the sixteen years he claimed. He was thin, tall, towheaded and burned to a brilliant red. He wore a tattered straw hat, a ragged fustian coat and buckskin trousers. Hanging from his shoulders were an old flintlock and powder horn. He stood mutely staring at the company around the table.

"Captain Thing, this is Miles Goodyear," said Narcissa.

"Come in, Miles," the factor nodded, pleasantly.

Miles came in slowly, not at all bashfully, but warily, as if he feared a trap set by these grown people.

"You deserted me, to-day, Miles!" cried Dr. Whitman.

Miles snorted. "Where'd you leave that damned old wagon, Doctor?" he exclaimed.

"No swearing, Miles!" said Marcus. "The wagon is down on the river bank. You and I'll have to be up before dawn to-morrow, so as to join the others, when they start."

"I'll be everlastingly—" began the boy indignantly.

"Wait a moment, Miles!" It was Narcissa who interrupted.

"I can't help it, Mrs. Whitman!" Miles turned his blue eyes toward hers, which gleamed like crystal in the candle light. "That wagon has just ruined the trip for me. I ain't had a chance to track Indians or hunt buffalo or anything. Just that wagon, bump, bump, creak, creak! Now it's stuck in the quicksand, now it's twisting in a whirlpool, now it's breaking its dirty neck—only it never does break

—down a canyon, now it's on its back, now it's riding the mules, now the mules are riding it. And always the doctor stands by the rotten thing as if—as if it was his woman. 'Come, Miles, old fellow, one more heave and we'll have her on dry land.' 'Don't be discouraged, Miles, we've only five miles more of mud, and she'll be right as a lady.' 'Brace up, Miles, some day you'll be boasting that you brought the old Conestoga first over the Rockies!'—And I've pushed and pulled and cussed the mules, day after day, and I haven't had any fun on this trip at all. I might just as well stayed home on the farm."

Miles uttered this tirade in a voice that was now bass, now high falsetto, and with indescribable rapidity and earnestness. The adults grouped about the candle watched him with faces in which sympathy and amusement struggled.

"And would you have me leave the old wagon behind, Miles?" asked the doctor, "after the many times I've explained to you that if we can get the wagon through to the Columbia it will prove that settlers can come through with their household goods?"

"It ain't fair to put it all on you and me!" cried the boy. "Let some of the others take their turn. Like old Spalding! He don't earn his salt. He's worn two leather seats on his pants out, just sitting, since we left the States. No, sir! I'm through."

"You are an impudent hound and if I were your father I'd thrash you," declared Spalding, his face purple and his brown eyes snapping.

"My father tried that once too often!" boasted the boy.

"If you took a position with the Hudson's Bay Company, you'd have to take a thrashing when you deserved it," said Captain Thing suddenly. "If you are looking for a place where youngsters receive no discipline, you'd better join the American Fur Trading Company."

Miles took an eager step toward the British factor. "But

don't you see, sir, I don't mind being trained—broke in for some real job. My father was always licking me when he was mad, just to ease his own temper. If you let me work here, I'll show you I can take training as well as the next one."

"They will make an Englishman of you, Miles," said Marcus.

"No, they won't!" exclaimed the boy. "But they'll make a rich man of me. If you get to be a chief trader and then a factor with the Hudson's Bay Company, they give you a share in the business. The American Fur Company! Say, you all saw what a riot they kept going at the 'Rendezvous'! The British haven't had this fort but a little while, but I've seen more bossing and business since sunset than I saw all the time at the 'Rendezvous.' Gosh!" Miles shifted from one bare foot to the other and gazed appealingly at Captain Thing.

That gentleman, obviously, was warmed by the youngster's admiration. "I think we might begin thrashing you into shape for the Company, to-morrow," he said.

"Whoop! I'm hired!" shouted the boy, grinning broadly at the doctor.

"He ought to go home!" said Narcissa.

"We're well rid of him!" ejaculated Spalding. "Now, how about that everlasting wagon, Doctor?"

"Oh! The wagon!" The doctor spoke as though an entirely new topic were being introduced. "You mean the 'horse canoe'?"

"Is there any other wagon within five hundred or a thousand miles?" demanded the clergyman.

"Well," said Marcus, "with all due respect to the Captain and his hospitality and his opinion, I shall take Jennie and Jewell and old lady Conestoga westward with me, when we leave, to-morrow."

Captain Thing leaned toward Marcus, his eyes like blue

steel. "Do you mean to tell me, Dr. Whitman, that you are deliberately taking your wife to live where the most horrible fate for a woman inevitably awaits her?"

"You exaggerate the danger, Captain," returned Marcus, grimly.

"I do not, sir. I know these Indians, intimately. And I am warning you, that from the moment you settle among these savages, they will know no rest until your wives have been dragged captive to their lodges. No Hudson's Bay Company employee would think himself a man to bring a white woman into this country. Do you understand me?"

"Only too well," replied the doctor, scowling thoughtfully.

"If you'll pardon me, for speaking frankly," Narcissa thrust her plate from her and clasped her beautiful hands on the table, "while we are grateful for your solicitude, we can't help feeling that you are not a little influenced by your desire to keep Americans out of this country."

Captain Thing tossed a lock of hair out of his eyes and ran his finger round the high stock at his neck. "I want very much to keep settlers out of this country, it is true," he said. "But," and his voice carried conviction with it, "I am speaking truth, without bias, when I tell you that while Mrs. Spalding, with her dark complexion and hair, may possibly escape the ravishing hands of the Indians, Mrs. Whitman, with her blond skin and braids, cannot."

Narcissa, watching the factor keenly, lifted her head as if she were a soldier called to arms.

"You convince me, more than ever, that missionary work is needed among these savages."

Captain Thing glared at her as though utterly baffled by the turn she had given to his warnings. Then exasperated beyond control, he brought his fist down on the table.

"Dr. Whitman," his voice rang with authority, "I forbid you to go to the Columbia. You must turn southward from here, to California."

For a moment, complete silence filled the crude room. Miles Goodyear, standing, forgotten, by the fireplace, stared as though his blue eyes must pop from his head. Here, in earnest, was the iron hand he professed to admire. The missionaries looked at each other and then at the British factor, as if not believing the evidence of their own ears.

Then Marcus broke the silence, his great voice calm but carrying an edge with it. "You forget yourself, sir! This territory is not British. It is held by joint treaty between our two countries. We have every right that you have, to settle here."

"We have the rights that come with prior occupation, sir!" Captain Thing's face was so deeply flushed, that Narcissa wondered at it. "Who is it," Thing went on, "that has brought a semblance of government and order into this Oregon country but the Hudson's Bay Company? Do you realize, gentlemen, that we maintain four forts on the Snake and Columbia alone, Fort Hall, Fort Boise, Fort Walla Walla and Fort Vancouver? That we have, beside our white employees, eight hundred half-breeds employed by us, in Oregon territory? That we control the fur industry here, and that you cannot exist in this arid waste, unless you have the privilege of purchasing the necessities of life from our posts? And do you realize that with the exception of Jason Lee's pitiful little mission on the Willamette, the United States has not so much as a ragged shirt to represent its interests in Oregon?"

"What has all this to do with us?" cried Spalding. "We are here to work for the Lord!"

Marcus made an impatient gesture at the clergyman, then turned to Captain Thing.

"We were informed before we left the United States, of the conditions here, sir. We are leaving, to-morrow morning, for the Columbia River."

"Why did McLeod and McKay bring us in here, anyhow,

if this was to be your attitude?" demanded young Gray.

"Because I told them to bring you on for this interview with me," retorted the factor. "I cannot hold you prisoners, of course, but I certainly can and shall—by Jove!" He interrupted himself, by springing to his feet. "Listen to that!"

Faintly through the open door came the sound of instruments that the Americans never before had heard. But Captain Thing knew that they were bagpipes!

"Malcolm!" he shouted. "Malcolm! Fire seven rounds! It's the Governor, here a month before his time!" He turned to his guests. "Now, then, my friends, we can settle this matter as it should be settled. The Governor of Rupert's Land has arrived."

"Who, in time, is the Governor of Rupert's Land?" muttered young Gray, but his query was lost in the ear-shattering report of the first cannon shot. The factor excused himself and hurried out, followed by Miles Goodyear.

Dr. Whitman grinned cheerfully. "The Governor of Rupert's Land must be something like a king. I wonder if we kiss his hand."

"I'll bet I don't!" snorted young Gray. Then he assumed the doctor's own grin. "I didn't know our little party was so important, did you? What's back of it all?"

"British impertinence!" said Spalding.

"He's not impertinent!" exclaimed Narcissa. "He's very much worried about us."

"He may well be," agreed Marcus, grimly.

The wailing of bagpipes was just without, now, and was drowned by huzzas.

A moment later Governor Simpson appeared in the doorway.

As has been said, he was not a tall man, nor a handsome one. Yet as he stood, his blue broadcloth cape thrown back over his shoulders, gray beaver hat in hand, there was that in the lift of his chin and the gleam of his eye that caused the

Americans, even young Gray, to come to their feet. John Leslie and Captain Thing followed the Governor into the room. "Your Excellency," said Thing, "this is a company of Protestant missionaries, who desire to settle on the Columbia." Beginning with Narcissa, he then presented each member of the group.

"You must be very tired, sir," said Narcissa. "If Captain Thing will excuse us, we will withdraw and leave you to your rest and supper. We plan an early start and will say good-by."

"Pray don't!" exclaimed Simpson, tossing his cape and hat to Malcolm, and giving Narcissa his peculiarly winsome smile. "Ladies are an enormous novelty to us poor travelers of the wilderness. I dined before sunset and am not at all weary. Just in the mood for a chat before Captain Thing's comfortable fireplace."

Malcolm, while the Governor was speaking, was pushing the crude chairs before the fire. Narcissa eyed Simpson speculatively. She knew almost nothing about the Hudson's Bay Company. Few Americans did have information regarding the great British corporation. She wished, suddenly, that she understood the rank of the Governor of Rupert's Land. That it was something very impressive to Captain Thing was obvious. But, if he was a person of exalted position, why did he wish to chat with the humble little mission band? She proposed to discover why.

Marcus, with a formal bow, utterly foreign to his customary careless manner, was beginning to make excuses and to edge toward the door, the Spaldings and young Gray following, when Narcissa, standing tall and beautiful beside the table, returned the Governor's smile and said:

"If ladies are rare in your life, sir, so are Governors rare in ours! Perhaps we might profitably explain ourselves to one another." She moved deliberately across the room and seated herself.

The others hesitated. Henry Spalding scowled impatiently, but Marcus, who had learned, in his five months of marriage, that Narcissa did nothing heedlessly, took Mrs. Spalding by the arm and seated her beside his wife.

"If explanations are in order," he exclaimed, "I must be here to take the part of old lady Conestoga!"

"Old lady Conestoga?" asked the Governor, seating himself where he could watch the fire and candle light on Narcissa's face. She, he told himself, would be the brains and the diplomatist of the group.

"Yes, sir," replied Marcus. "She's a vixen, too! Made lots of trouble coming across the plains, that old prairie schooner! But she's standing just outside the fort."

"You did well, Dr. Whitman!" exclaimed Simpson. "I can imagine your struggles."

"Perhaps you can imagine, too," said Narcissa, in her voice of lovely overtones, "the doctor's feeling when Captain Thing tried to persuade him that it's impossible for him to take the wagon farther. 'Old lady Conestoga' is the very apple of my husband's eye."

"Is she indeed?" The Governor laughed softly. "And you show no jealousy, madam?"

"Impatience, perhaps," replied Narcissa, "but not jealousy. And I really am a little ashamed of the impatience, when I apprehend the doctor's dreams."

"The doctor's dreams!" repeated the Governor, quietly. "Are they, perchance, not your dreams, too?"

There was a pause during which the cottonwood and buffalo chips in the fireplace crackled.

Narcissa looked from Simpson's face, with breeding in its every line, to the doctor's homespun visage, then back to the fire. "My husband's dream of a mission on the Columbia is my dream, certainly." She hesitated and again looked at Simpson, appraisingly, then went on, calmly, "His dream that, by showing that a wagon can cross the Rockies, he

makes it possible for settlers to follow, is less important to me than that of converting savages to Christianity. Nevertheless, I shall use every effort to help him to realize that dream."

Simpson observed the throwing of the gauntlet with a certain sensation of relief. He was trembling with weariness after the terrible trip up the Snake River, and his desire for fencing was not keen. He would have put over the conversation until the next day, had not Captain Thing replied to his hurried question in the stockade, by saying that the missionaries were determined to go on at dawn. He was utterly weary and moreover, he had been utterly unprepared to find in the missionary group a person of Narcissa Whitman's kind. He had thought he knew what he called the "sniveling Methodist" type that turned to missionary work. They were persistent as only the spineless human can be—not to be shaken from a purpose any more than a limpet from a rock. He had thought to change their plans by the force of his own often brutal will.

And here was Narcissa Whitman, American and missionary though she was, a person of his own world! The Spaldings and young Gray he swept aside as of no moment, as far as making decisions was concerned. The doctor, frank, determined, a bit crude in externals, one fought him, without gloves. But Mrs. Whitman! How, he asked himself, was it possible that she could be a missionary, that she could be married to a man like her husband, and how was he to force her into California?

"Perhaps you'd not mind telling me what means you have of support in the wilderness," he asked suddenly. "Do you hope to draw on the Hudson's Bay Company posts for supplies?"

"We are sent out," replied Marcus, "by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which already has a thriving mission in the Sandwich Islands. We

plan, if necessary, to get staples from there. We shall grow our own grains, vegetables and meat."

"And, pardon me for being personal," said Simpson, "do you feel that Mrs. Whitman will make a success of such a life?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Henry Spalding, irritably. "Why shouldn't she? She's a big, strong female, who's stood up a good deal better in this ordeal of overland travel than my delicate wife. Yet it's Mrs. Whitman who gets all the sympathy and Mrs. Spalding none. I'm sick of it. Come, Eliza, we're going to bed. We start at dawn."

Mrs. Spalding looked deprecatingly at the Governor, who rose and bowed over her hand. "Madam, I hope, indeed, that you will soon grow strong enough to enjoy the remainder of your journey."

"Oh, my sickness hasn't had anything to do with the trip," returned Mrs. Spalding, frankly, "I've got a weak stomach and my food r'ars up on me. And you're right about Sister Whitman. She'd ought to be singing in a big church choir in Boston or New York instead of roughing it out here. I'll say good night to all you folks, now." She yielded to the impatient jerk of her husband's hand on her skirt and followed him out the door.

"Old lady Conestoga and I," said Narcissa, with a low laugh, "are really rivals to see which is less desired in the Columbia River country."

"You've heard no complaints from me!" exclaimed Marcus.

"Nor from me," chuckled young Gray, his intelligent eyes twinkling. "Doctor and I both admit you're the brains of the expedition."

"Nonsense!" protested Narcissa. "Marcus is that! I'm merely a strolling minstrel—thus far in the adventure, at least."

"Adventure?" queried the Governor. "Is it an adventure to you?"

Narcissa's eyes glowed. "Yes! An adventure after God! A Pilgrim's Progress that ends in—" she hesitated, her eyes on the fire.

"Yes! In what way does it end, my dear Madam Whitman?" Simpson was bending toward her.

She gave him a full look from her fine eyes. "In peace," she said.

Captain Thing, who, during all this conversation had remained silent but observant, in his place beyond the Governor, now said, suddenly:

"If you do go on to-morrow, do you realize that it must be without escort?"

"Yes," replied young Gray, "but that doesn't worry us."

"You have the valor of ignorance," said the Governor, scornfully. "Madam Whitman, Doctor, Mr. Gray, I will make a suggestion. Come into the Hudson's Bay Company. Establish a school for us at Fort Vancouver. Life at the fort, where Dr. McLoughlin lives, will be vastly congenial to Madam Whitman. There will be unlimited opportunities to make money, and to win advancement."

Narcissa suddenly laughed. "Every moment, Governor, you advance us in our estimate of our own importance! After all, as we have reminded Captain Thing, this territory is held jointly by our two countries and you cannot legally detain us or divert us. We are going on, and we are going with the earnest desire not only to convert the savages to Christianity, but to make way for Americans to settle on the Columbia, if we discover it to be a land appropriate for settlement."

"You are aware, are you, madam, that the Hudson's Bay Company will lose money if this section ceases to be preserved for fur producing purposes? We are a cold-blooded

corporation and we shall do all in our power to keep settlers away from the Columbia."

"Just how far does your power extend?" asked Narcissa, quietly.

"That, Madam Whitman, remains to be seen," replied the Governor. "As a test, I make a suggestion. To-morrow, turn southwest instead of northwest and establish your mission among the Indians of California."

"But we have been directed by the American Board," said Marcus, impatiently, "to work among the Indians of Oregon, whither we are going. . . . Captain Thing, I would like to purchase four horses from you and a month's supply of flour, sugar and tea."

It was Governor Simpson who replied. "I'm sorry, Dr. Whitman, but, unless you agree to turn south to California, the Hudson's Bay Company cannot sell you anything."

The doctor flushed angrily. "After this evening's conversation, I'm not surprised."

"I am astonished," went on Governor Simpson blandly, "that a well established institution like the American Board of Commissioners should send an ill equipped expedition to set itself against the Hudson's Bay Company."

"But the American Board," returned Narcissa, "sent us out for the sole purpose of doing missionary work among the Indians. It did not dream but what you would be glad to receive us."

"Pray do not misunderstand me!" said the Governor, hastily. "To receive you, socially, Madam Whitman, I would consider a privilege. But the American Board has sent you to us to undermine us."

"Nothing of the sort," growled the doctor. "This idea of the wagon and all it signifies is mine! The Board has nothing to do with it. We are sincere missionaries, but we are Americans, before we are missionaries."

Narcissa rose. "Well, Marcus, since we are to travel

without food supplies, it behooves us to get to sleep early and conserve our strength."

Marcus and young Gray rose with alacrity, and to the surprise of Captain Thing and John Leslie, Governor Simpson made no objection to their departure. But when he had finished bowing Narcissa out the door, he said abruptly to Thing:

"What are their supplies?"

"Practically nothing, sir. They lived on jerked buffalo meat and tea all the way from the 'Rendezvous.'"

"And their horses?"

"Are in frightful condition, sir," replied the Captain.

Governor Simpson dropped wearily into his chair and for a long time, stared at the fire. Finally, he looked up to say, with apparent irrelevance, "That's a beautiful woman, and a fine one, too." He sighed, then went on, "She may have influence enough over the other missionaries to get them to start off without supplies. So even their scarecrow horses must be lost for a day or so. It's a scurvy trick, I know, but—I must have time to work on her."

Captain Thing nodded, then said, "You must have left Montreal very early, this year, sir. Rupert's Land gave you an early spring, I suppose."

The Governor smiled, "No, Thing, the season was as usual. But I received word on Peace River that these missionaries were coming and I made haste to help you. These Whitmans are precisely the sort of people we must not have in Oregon. If I can have a few years more, even two years, before the Americans find a trail across the Rockies, I can save this whole territory to England. Those two years, I must have, *at any cost!*"

Young John Leslie spoke for the first time. "Dr. and Madam Whitman are not the sort of people one can intimidate. Madam Whitman will enjoy a war of wits and the doctor is a bulldog for tenacity. They are not my idea of

missionaries. The Spaldings are the accepted type. What sort of a doctor is Whitman, Captain Thing?"

"He's an accredited physician. Left a good practise, I understand, for this missionary work," replied the Captain.

"Well, we have them safely delayed for a day or so, at any rate," sighed the Governor. "I'd like to retire, Thing, and give a night's sleep to the problem."

Captain Thing rose and lighted the Governor's bedroom candle.

CHAPTER III

JO BUFFALO

AT dawn, the following morning, Marcus squatted before a little fire of buffalo chips, watching with an air of comical dismay, the unsavory balls of flour and water which he was frying in buffalo tallow. Narcissa, setting out battered tin plates and cups on an oil cloth which she had spread near the fire, caught his expression and laughed softly:

"You are saying a last fond farewell to fried bread, aren't you, Monsieur the cook!"

Before Marcus could reply, Spalding came up with a pail of water. "Eliza is poorly again. I'll take her some tea, right away, please."

"Sorry, Henry!" the doctor looked up from his cookery, into the preacher's irritated morning face. "The tea is all out and our amiable hosts refuse to sell us any."

Spalding uttered an exclamation of impatience. "Then we shall have to buy from one of the traders!"

Marcus shook his head. "I've already made the rounds. Every one, it seems, is as destitute as we are. Heat a little milk for Mrs. Spalding. It will be better for her than tea, anyhow."

"Has Miles brought the cows up, yet, so's I can milk?" demanded Spalding. "Or is he already working for Captain Thing?"

"He started after the herd, both horses and cows, a half hour ago," said Narcissa. "He should be here any minute now, especially as breakfast is ready!"

And certainly Miles' nose made a punctual timepiece, for at the moment he raced into camp. "Breakfast ready?" he

cried. "Say, I can't find one of our beasts, hair, hoof or hide. The Indians sure have driven them off."

"Indians?" Narcissa and Marcus stared at each other, consternation in their eyes.

"Could you get no trace of them, Miles?" asked the doctor. "Who attended to hobbling them, last night!"

"I did," answered Spalding. "They wouldn't have wandered by themselves, for I left them in a patch of grass down by the river that they went for, ravenously, and there was more than enough to keep them busy, all night."

"This will bear looking into," murmured Marcus. "Miles, when you've finished your breakfast, borrow a horse, and scour the valley. I'm going into the fort to make inquiries."

But inquiries were futile. The employees of the Hudson's Bay Company were polite but astoundingly ignorant. Baffled in the fort, Marcus went off to call on the Indian encampment, a few hundred feet beyond the stockade. But the Indians knew nothing nor did they have horses to sell to the "Bostons."

In the meantime, Spalding having joined Miles in the search and Mrs. Spalding being asleep in the tent, Narcissa seated herself on a great rock that overlooked the valley and gave herself over to thought. And it was here that Governor Simpson found her.

Immaculately groomed, his white ruffles fluttering in the breeze, he doffed his high hat and made a deep bow.

"Good morning, Madam Whitman!"

"Good morning, Governor Simpson!"

"May I join you in your contemplation of this wonderful scene?"

Narcissa swept her riding skirt aside, and smiled, as she said, "It's fitting that we should contemplate it, jointly!"

The Governor seated himself, not so closely but what he could observe easily the classic perfection of Narcissa's profile.

"You did not start at dawn, I see," observed Simpson.

"You are discerning, being a Scotchman!" Narcissa raised her eyebrows. "Our cattle seem to have grown impatient. They have disappeared and my surmise is that they've gone on into the Columbia valley to await our coming."

"That would be a pity, indeed!" murmured Simpson, eyeing her blond braids and feeling a sudden aversion to all the red-skinned beauties that graced the various Hudson's Bay Company posts.

Narcissa's eyes twinkled. "I'm lost in admiration of your sympathetic nature!" she exclaimed.

"And I," retorted the Governor, "am lost in admiration of your valor in undertaking this adventure."

"One needs very little personal valor when taking the trip with a man like Dr. Whitman," observed Narcissa. "He thinks of everything. He does everything."

"You're a bride, so your enthusiasm is excusable," smiled Simpson.

"My enthusiasm needs no excuse!" cried Narcissa, her face flushing.

"Nay, but your marriage does," retorted the Governor, coolly.

Narcissa rose. "What do you mean, sir? Apologize at once!"

"I apologize," the Governor rose with her. "My remark did not in the least reflect on your husband's excellent qualities. He is a noble lad, in my estimation, a rough diamond, but none the less a diamond, and a man to be feared by us, in his fixed purpose. But I know my world, madam. I have lived in it longer than you and I say to you frankly—"

Narcissa raised her hand as though to ward off a blow. "Don't say it, Governor Simpson, I am not interested."

"Ah, but you are! You think of it day and night. You were thinking of it, with desperation and tragedy in your eyes, as I came upon you. I know my world, and women of

culture in it do not marry uncultured men and undertake a life suitable only to the farmer's wife, except on the rebound from some unhappy affair of the heart."

Narcissa's eyes were dark with anger. Had she followed her impulse, she would have swept away from the man without a word. But she dared not do so. She must establish and keep a friendly relationship with this highest power in Oregon territory. The Governor, watching her handsome face, with a clear and sympathetic gray eye, gave her no opportunity to speak.

"I know precisely what you are thinking!" he went on, gently. "That I am impertinent. That I presume on my position. That you would annihilate me with a glance, were it not so important for your party to maintain terms of friendship with me. Dear Madam Whitman, I acknowledge all that. But be patient with me, and let me explain myself!"

Narcissa did not speak. Still flushed, her eyes still disdainful, she realized that there was that about this man which one could not disdain. She did not speak. Her loyalty to Marcus forbade that. But she did not leave him. Her loyalty to the adventure bade her stay. She waited.

Governor Simpson looked slowly across the valley, to the burning ranges to the west.

"The life one leads in the wilderness would mean, as far as personal gain is concerned, nothing but sacrifice, were it not for certain subtle qualities of mind one accumulates. For my soul's sake, I have kept to physical pomp and formality. You have seen to what degeneracy careless habits lead one on the plains? But also, for my soul's sake, I have cast aside those formalities of personal intercourse, which clog and hold back men's understanding of each other. You and I will never, in all probability, see each other again. I feel drawn toward you by all that could be fine in an enduring and noble friendship. That we must be hostile to each other is another sample of nature's amazing wasteful-

ness. It must be so. Yet, I ask you, how can you consider me impertinent when I see a person who roused in me, immediately, feelings of profound admiration and liking, immersed in an impossible situation, how can you, I repeat, call me impertinent when I utter a word of comprehension?"

"My situation is in no sense impossible," said Narcissa. "I look forward with keenest intellectual relish, to attacking its problems. You must waste no sympathy on me, Governor Simpson."

"Then you do not share that strong feeling of friendliness that was born to me last night?" asked Simpson, his clear eyes intent on hers.

"Yes, I do!" said Narcissa, suddenly. "But that doesn't mean that I can permit you to criticize my marriage."

"It merely permits us to be enemies, then?" exclaimed the Governor, with a smile.

"So long as you persist in opposing us, yes," retorted Narcissa. "Supposing, Governor, that we would give you a solemn pledge not to try to help the American cause, but to stick strictly to our endeavor to Christianize the Indians. What would be your attitude?"

Simpson shook his head. "Once white women have settled on farms in the Columbia valley, a terrific blow has been struck at the supremacy of our Company. But why discuss it? You'd never make such a promise, eh?"

"Marcus and I were wondering if our duty to the American Board did not demand it," replied Narcissa, simply.

"'Twould not be enough!" the Governor's voice was brusk. "Madam Whitman, why not accept my offer of last night? You and your confrères could found a wonderful school, and who knows but what it might mean to the Pacific coast and Rupert's Land, in the dim future, what Edinburgh and Cambridge Universities have meant to the British Isles? What could be a more fitting work for you?

McLeod was telling me, this morning, that you have a glorious singing voice that has received the finest of training. Then, be Gad, we could establish a conservatoire—music and the arts!" The Scotchman's gray eyes burned with the sincerity of his dream. "I have welded the Nor'west Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, so that, commercially, we are impregnable. But why should the Corporation be purely commercial? Why should we not foster British culture as well as British trade? Madame Whitman, join me in this!"

Had he a full conception of how violent a temptation his offer was to Narcissa?

She stood with her back to the crude stockade, staring at the tortured orange ranges that blocked the way to the northwest. Fort Hall was surrounded by no such chaos as marked the American "Rendezvous." Yet its crudeness, its isolation, were unmistakable. And Fort Hall, Narcissa knew, was a seething metropolis compared with the solitude that awaited her, should their mission be established on the Columbia. And isolation and crudeness did count with her, she acknowledged to herself, for the first time since leaving the Mississippi steamboat that had landed their party in St. Louis.

Staring at the threatening ranges, Narcissa suddenly faced, from a new angle, the life to which, in a moment of profound emotionalism, she had committed herself. Where now, suddenly looking at herself and her undertaking from the point of view of the man beside her, was that soul stirring emotion? With a deep sinking of the heart, she realized that it was with her no longer. She closed her eyes for a moment. And instantly, she saw the parlor of her Aunt Hetty's house in Bleecker Street in New York City, and herself, standing beside the piano, singing, while she looked down on the long, strong fingers of the man who was playing her accompaniment. She had not loved this man, but

when he had asked her to marry him, she had consented, for he epitomized for her the great passion of her life—which was music. To go with him to Europe, to consummate her dream of a singing career under his tutelage; for this, she had told him frankly, she would marry him.

This had been two years ago. And even after two years of contemplation, she could not believe that her father could have been so blindly obdurate. She always had thought of the judge as both tolerant and ambitious. Yet it had meant nothing to him that the man his daughter wanted to marry was a great composer. To Judge Prentiss he was merely a foreigner, who wanted to carry his daughter to Paris, there to lead her life living among grand opera goers! To the deeply religious household in Angelica, there was something blasphemous in the very name, Paris. And such was his hold in Narcissa's deep heart, such was the strength of the influence of the narrow home training, that Narcissa gave in to the old judge.

The violence of her reaction, the judge had not anticipated. She gave up New York. She gave up her musical studies and turned to church work. All the passion that she had poured into the pursuit of her music, she poured into the revival work to which her church was dedicated. For months, she lived in a madness of soul-saving, a madness that she cultivated to keep herself from dwelling on the blissful days in Bleecker Street.

When, not seven months ago, Marcus Whitman, fresh from his marvelous trip to the Indians of the West, had come to the little church and had told, with his peculiar eloquence, of the needs of the savages, the whole town had been stirred. For two months he had kept Angelica at fever pitch. And Narcissa, whose love of adventure had helped her to force her father to send her to New York to study, felt suddenly an overwhelming desire to follow the trackless way that would lead thousands of savage souls to God.

When Marcus, buoyant, virile, on fire with his dreams of carrying Christ across the Rockies, after a whirlwind wooing, had pleaded with her to marry him and help him to establish the mission for which the American Board had destined him, she assented eagerly. Eagerly! Oh, how eager to leave behind all the poignant reminders of the happy days of music and of that music master, who had lifted her soul to the very heights of God.

The excitement of this greatest of adventures had buoyed her consistently, until their arrival at Fort Hall; until this man of her own world, the world to which Marcus could not belong, had turned her eyes inward. All night, she had lain awake, among her sleeping comrades in the community tent, appalled by a sudden realization of the coarsenesses, the deprivations, the loneliness, the futility to which she had dedicated her life. Her courageousness and her truth-loving instincts told her that Captain Thing had been neither lying nor exaggerating when he had told them that the Indians could not be Christianized, that she would be dwelling in the midst of alarms and horrors. She was not physically afraid; but now, as she for the first time realized that never again would she see men and women of Simpson's type, that Indians, from whom already, she turned away, sickened by their filth, that Indians and blasphemous trappers, were to be her portion, nostalgia clutched her inmost soul.

To establish a school at Fort Vancouver! What a way out! She had heard much of Dr. McLoughlin at the "Rendezvous," of his brilliancy, of his high-handed ways, and of the elaborate manner of life carried on at the fort. And Narcissa knew temptation.

Governor Simpson waited patiently, white ruffles fluttering below his stock, his fingers holding firmly to his cane. It was long before Narcissa turned to him. She was a little white about the lips, a little strained about the eyes.

"You must let me think about this thing, alone," she said.

She turned from him abruptly and walked slowly past the stockade toward the Indian tents that clustered south of the fort. The Governor watched her for a moment, then he returned to the fort where the Company's accounts were awaiting him. Narcissa, after gazing, unseeingly, at the gaily decorated tepees, moved on down the valley. She would walk until she had settled on an answer for Simpson.

After some three months on the plains, she had learned several rules of the trail; one of the most important of these being that, when in camp, one must never wander out of sight of the tent. So now, absorbed as she was by her thoughts, she did not fail, from time to time, to glance back at the gleaming white walls of Fort Hall. The men had scattered in their search for the live stock, to the north and west, toward the Snake. Somewhere, back of her struggle with Simpson's temptation, the idea persisted that in the sagebrush hills, several miles south of the fort, some trace of the animals might be found. She had heard that the Indians sometimes found grazing there for their herds. So she moved steadily southward.

Narcissa was a swift and tireless walker. She frequently had dismounted from her tired horse or had left the wagon, on the long day's trail, to tramp for miles over the trackless way, just for the sheer joy of walking. So, now, she was finding rest and refreshment in her splendid, swinging stride. When she reached the hills, she carefully oriented herself, then plunged rapidly into a little draw or valley that was overgrown with sagebrush, higher than her head. But the roots were thick-set with grass which mountain horses would devour with gusto.

Watching, automatically, for herd signs, Narcissa prowled in this sagebrush forest, for some time, then clambered to the top of a rock heap for a view of Fort Hall. But she could not discover it. Annoyed at herself for not keeping

a closer watch, but not really worried, Narcissa turned to the right, to clamber up the hillside, from which she was certain she could obtain a better view. But the hillside proved to be ugly and steep. Hampered by her heavy riding skirt, she gave up trying to climb it, after a few minutes and decided to turn back on her own trail. But to her annoyance, the valley floor at this point was covered with a broken lava that retained no footprints. She wore loosely around her neck, a handkerchief which she had purchased at Fort Laramie, to be used, trail fashion, to cover her lips and nostrils when dust was unbearable. This she removed and fastened to the top of a sage bush by bending down a tall branch. It was a brilliant yellow and she used it as a beacon, while she beat about in a wide circle. But she could not pick up her lost trail.

The sun had sunk below the hills but she knew that the plains must still be covered with bright sunshine, and she knew that, with the sun at her left, she must be facing north; and northward lay the fort. But immediately to the north lay the inhospitable wall of the valley into which she had wandered so stupidly. She determined that she would scale that wall, at whatever cost, positive that from its crest she could see the fort.

Still with the kerchief fluttering on the shrub, she fastened her skirt well above her knees and again attacked the ugly climb. It was knee and elbow, toe and finger work; thrusting the tips of her riding boots into cracks that cut the stout leather, catching with her long, strong fingers at outcroppings that tore her nails, moving now on hands and knees, now hanging, uneasily, to a stout sagebrush root that cracked ominously under her weight, now running eagerly up a few feet of gentle slope to cast herself at a new outcropping of the red rock that formed the hill.

She was frightened now, but not panic-stricken. She still could see the yellow handkerchief, fluttering far below, and

the sky line above her grew nearer and nearer. She paused, when about ten feet from the top, to recover her breath for the last onslaught. And she wondered, while she rested, if there would be danger from Indians if she shouted for help when she reached the summit. She did not believe that, so near the fort, Indians would molest her and she thought it probable that she could persuade one of them to guide her home. She thought over, hurriedly, her scant stock of the Flathead and Pawnee tongues, then began the last leg of her climb. Many precious minutes of daylight were consumed, before she crawled on her hands and knees over the last outcropping that separated her from the summit. Then, without rising, she gazed eagerly about her. Little hills stretched in every direction, most of them taller than the one on which she crouched. She could not see the plains.

She began to tremble. No longer could she deny to herself that her predicament was serious. She had heard terrible stories about people who wandered from the trail; stories of thirst, starvation and of death by wolves. She, herself, had seen human bones that wolves had worried and gnawed. As for Indians, sitting in the vast solitude, with not even a swooping eagle to keep her company, she thought that one of the good-natured bucks who hung around Fort Hall would be really welcome. And yet she dared not call. There were other than Flatheads in the country; and with sudden, awful force, she recalled the solemn warnings of Captain Thing.

She knew that as soon as Marcus missed her, he would give an alarm. She believed that if they did not find the stock grazing in the river bottom, the men would naturally turn to these hills. But when would Marcus miss her? When, if at all, would they turn southward?

She could, of course, give no answer to these queries. But she refused to lose her head. She fought back her almost overwhelming desire to run screaming along the hill top. Instead, she decided to return to the little valley. Searchers

would follow the valley, not these hostile crests. She made the descent rapidly, the faithful kerchief beckoning her like a little flame in the dusk of the draw. She reached her starting place without mishap, rearranged her skirt and stood gazing about her, trying to decide on her next move.

The decision, however, was made for her; for as she stood, a mottled brown and white pony, bearing an Indian, pushed suddenly through the bushes and stopped before her.

The two stared at each other. Narcissa did not speak, though she recognized this Indian. He it was, who, at the "Rendezvous," had hung about the mission tent more prominently than any of the other braves. And when Marcus, after great difficulty, had driven him away, one of the trappers had expostulated.

"Don't never hurt an Indian's vanity. 'Specially Jo Buffalo's. He ain't quite right in his mind and he's meaner than even most of these damn redskins. One of 'em will harbor a grudge over a trifle for years."

And this was Jo Buffalo grinning at her!

"You mak' no fear," he said, "Jo Buffalo not kill you. He mak' marry you."

Narcissa forced herself to speak coolly. "Show me the way to the fort and I will give you a great deal of money."

Jo Buffalo shook his head. "Jo Buffalo rich. Have his lodge up there," raising his hand to the east. "No want money. Want mak' marry with white woman. White woman with yellow hair. All Indians, they talk about her. Jo Buffalo, he got her!" with a delighted laugh.

"If you do not take me back to the fort," declared Narcissa, with as haughty an air as she could muster, "the Hudson's Bay Company will punish you."

The Indian shook his head. "You, Boston! Hudson's Bay Company glad to have Bostons die. Hudson's Bay Company not want white woman there," pointing west.

"Injuns not want white woman there. Bostons not stay long where no white woman."

Sharp resentment added itself to Narcissa's fears. Was ever a woman made as unwelcome to any new land, as she was being made to Oregon?

"Nevertheless," she said disdainfully, "you must leave me in peace or Governor Simpson will have you shot. He is my friend."

"The Kitchie Okema?" asked Jo Buffalo. "Huh! Kitchie Okema give orders Injuns run off Bostons' cows, Bostons' horses, Bostons' mules. He not friend."

"How do you know he gave those orders?" asked Narcissa, sharply.

Jo Buffalo shrugged his shoulders and dismounted. "You, Yellow Hair, get on Jo Buffalo's horse."

"Why?" asked Narcissa, wondering if the Indian could see the throbbing of her throat.

"Jo Buffalo mak' marry you, in his lodge, to-night."

"I'll kill myself, first," said Narcissa, slowly, looking the Indian full in the eye.

Jo Buffalo grunted with surprise. He glanced over his stalwart frame. He was a magnificent specimen of humanity. He stood well over six feet in height, and was possessed of regular, aquiline features that were not without a certain malignant beauty. Even the grotesque red calico shirt and the ugly "store pants" could not greatly mar his savage grace.

"Will kill yourself?" he asked, wonderingly. "You not like mak' marry Injun? Your buck not great man, like Jo Buffalo."

He sat down on the rock heap as though prepared to argue indefinitely on the subject.

. . . . . .

About an hour before Jo Buffalo's arrival on the scene, the doctor, with Gray and Spalding, returned to the tent.

Their hunt for the live stock had been fruitless. Mrs. Spalding, dozing within the tent, roused herself to express a grievance.

"Sister Whitman hasn't been near me since this morning! I suppose the men around here are beau-ing her, same as they did at Fort Laramie and the 'Rendezvous.' But she never did neglect me this way before."

"Well! Well!" laughed Marcus. "I don't blame you for complaining! I'll find her and do some complaining, myself. Last I saw of her, she was talking to Governor Simpson. Poor girl! I suspect she's saying her farewell to civilization! We'll have to forgive her."

He appeared not to hear the derisive grunt with which the preacher met these remarks and made his way, a little dejectedly, perhaps, to the fort. Governor Simpson, looking up from the accounts John Leslie and Captain Thing were checking with him, greeted the doctor cheerfully.

"Well, Dr. Whitman, have you found your truant herd?"

Marcus shook his head. "No, Governor, I have not. May I ask you gentlemen if you know anything of Mrs. Whitman's whereabouts?"

Captain Thing looked up quickly. "I saw her about noon, walking south of the fort."

"I saw her last," said the Governor, "when she finished talking with me by the great stone yonder, about half after eleven."

"I, too, saw her then," added young Leslie.

"Mrs. Spalding hasn't seen her all the afternoon!" exclaimed Marcus. "She must have strayed away—" He stopped abruptly and looked bitterly at the three men. "I have neither horses nor food, though I have money to pay for both. By the eternals, if you gentlemen do not allow me—"

Simpson, rising suddenly, interrupted. "Whitman, the resources of the fort are yours! Go out and search the Indian

lodges and question all the whites you see, while we organize a search party."

Marcus' tense face blanched. "Do you actually fear—" he began.

But again the Governor interrupted him, this time with a roar. "I fear the worst! Be Gad, didn't we warn you? Didn't we explain to you?"

But Marcus' roar drowned the Governor's. "After all your protests against my poor wife's coming into Oregon, I suppose you, sir, would be delighted if she were lost!"

"Be silent, you fool!" Simpson was shouting no longer. His voice dropped to a little more than a harsh whisper. "I would not have an Indian so much as touch the hem of Madam Whitman's skirt. Don't waste time making insulting innuendos, man!"

Marcus, with a groan of awful premonition, ran out into the stockade. Several persons had observed Narcissa start off on her walk. The doctor gathered all the meager information available and returned to the stockade, to find a small search party organized. Few whites were available, for Factors McLeod and McKay had left that day. Governor Simpson and Captain Thing, with Malcolm and Gray, leaving John Leslie to keep the fort, represented the white contingent. Monique and several of the other half-breed voyageurs were on hand, chattering excitedly among themselves. Marcus hastily mounted the horse provided for him and the cavalcade was starting when Henry Spalding ran in through the gates.

"Give me a horse, some one!" he cried.

"Your place is with your wife, Henry!" exclaimed Marcus.

The preacher seized the bridle of Marcus' horse and his sallow face worked as he looked up at the doctor. "I knew Narcissa Prentiss long before you did, Whitman! Tell them to give me a horse."

Governor Simpson nodded to Malcolm, and Spalding was hoisted into the saddle of one of the extra mounts. The party moved quickly out of the gates and started southward, John Leslie and a handful of Indians silently watching their departure.

Simpson had given his orders. Hunting in pairs, the party was to spread fanwise and comb the valley, up into the hills that rose to the south.

Marcus was to work with the Governor. They guided their horses, zig-zag, across every draw and hillock for some time, without speaking. But just before they reached the first of the hills, a sort of despair seized the doctor. He groaned aloud.

"I was a fool!"

"You were," agreed Simpson grimly, glancing at Marcus from beneath the brim of his gray beaver. "By the living God, sir, how could you have had so little appreciation of conditions, if you were at Green River last year, as to bring her here?"

Marcus, wiping the cold sweat from his forehead, thrust his face into the Scotchman's, both visages gray and set in the sinking sun. "You don't know what you're talking about! Would she have married me unless I'd had the founding of the mission to tempt her with?"

"It was absolutely necessary that she marry you, then?" cried Simpson. "You and no one else? God, what selfishness we men are capable of!"

He dug his spurs into his horse and plunged into the sagebrush thicket that choked the little valley. With a groan, Marcus followed him. Working through the sagebrush was a heart-breaking job. The horses detested it and showed their dislike by bucking and shaking their heads and kicking as the prickly shrub tore at their manes and flanks. Their progress was slow until, beyond them, sounded a boy's angry voice.

"Oh, you would, would you, you dirty, stinking Snake, you! I'll show you!"

"Miles!" shouted Marcus. "Miles! We're coming! Doctor Whitman and Governor Simpson." And the two horses, suddenly roweled to the bone, leaped toward the sound of the boyish voice.

Against a tall rock stood Narcissa. As Marcus and Simpson appeared, an Indian dropped his hands from Miles Goodyear's throat and flung himself on his pony, then crashed away through the underbrush.

"Catch him!" shrieked Miles. "Catch him! It's Jo Buffalo!"

"We'll get him at our leisure," said Simpson grimly, watching the doctor, who had thrown himself from his horse, with a great cry:

"Narcissa! Are you hurt?"

"Not at all, except for a twisted wrist," replied Narcissa, her voice a little uneven. "He had just grasped me to force me aboard his horse when Miles came. I must have held him in parley for an hour. I even sang to him!"

"It was the singing I heard," panted Miles. "I'd hear you sing 'The Poor Exile of Erin' if you were in heaven and I was in hell."

"I think I'd like to sit down a moment," said Narcissa, looking about her vaguely.

Governor Simpson laid his blue cape against the rock. "Lean on this, Madam Whitman!"

Narcissa, helped by the two men, slid to the ground and lay back against the cloak-draped rock, her eyes closed, her face deathly white in the afterglow.

"Has she fainted?" gasped Miles.

"No!" murmured Narcissa, with a little twisted smile. "I'm just enjoying my fright, now!"

Simpson cleared his throat. "How did you come here, Master Goodyear?"

"Oh, I was scouting after the horses and cows and I just got 'em located up the valley here, where an Injun has them cached, when I heard Mrs. Whitman singing. I knew something was wrong, for sure. I wanted to sneak quietly away from the Indian that had the herd and doing that I came up to Mrs. Whitman just as she was trying to pull her arm away from Jo Buffalo. Say, I gave him the—er gosh dingdest kick I ever gave any one, right in the—er—stomach."

"Well," said the Governor, "you are a credit to the Hudson's Bay Company, young sir! Now, climb you up on the hillside yonder and fire your gun three times. That's the signal 'All's well' to the other searchers."

Miles replied with an embarrassed air: "I—I haven't got any ammunition. That's why I didn't shoot Jo Buffalo and that Injun that stole our herd."

"How did you waste your powder and shot?" demanded the Governor.

"Waste it!" retorted Miles. "Gosh, I ain't had any for a month! I just carry this gun to scare folks with."

"I see!" chuckled Simpson. "Take the powder-horn from my saddle and load your gun, quickly."

Marcus, chafing Narcissa's hands, watched her with agonized solicitude.

"Don't try to move till you feel quite yourself again, my dear wife," he said, as, at the sound of Miles' first shot, she sat erect.

"I shall do very well now," replied Narcissa. "You haven't asked me, Marcus, what I was doing so far from the fort."

"I was too happy to have found you to bother about that. But since you remind me, how could you be so foolhardy, Narcissa?" asked the doctor, his great voice astoundingly gentle.

"I, too, was hunting for the lost herd," said Narcissa,

looking, however, not at Marcus but at Governor Simpson. "Of course, now that Jo Buffalo will have warned his colleague, the herd is lost forever."

"Not so!" declared Simpson. "I shall put Malcolm in charge to bring it in. Jo Buffalo will have gotten into the mountains, but eventually we shall have him too."

Narcissa stared at the Scotchman, enigmatically, then she held out her hands to her husband. "If you will help me to rise and mount your horse, Marcus, I'll be glad to start for the fort."

"Are you quite fit?" exclaimed Simpson.

"Quite!" replied Narcissa, as she rose and smoothed back her shining hair. "Though I do feel as I suppose poor Henry Spalding felt when that tornado struck him near Fort Leavenworth. You remember, Marcus, that what afflicted him most was that he seemed to be the butt of every mishap that visited the convoy. 'Why does everything happen to me,' he whimpered a dozen times. And that's my kind of a plaint. Why should all the hostility to the Americans, entering Oregon, center on me?"

"But Jo Buffalo evidently had no hostility to your entering Oregon," said Simpson grimly.

"No," replied Narcissa, "but he feared no punishment from the one source of justice here, your Company, because he knew of your hostility to me."

"And yet, Narcissa," interjected Marcus quickly, "the moment he heard that you had disappeared, the Governor placed all the resources of the Company at my disposal."

Narcissa smiled. "He was a generous enemy in that, of course!"

"Come! Come! Madam Whitman, you mustn't make me seem a brute when my heart was in my throat at the thought of your possible fate!" cried Simpson heatedly.

"I am grateful to you!" Narcissa exclaimed, "and doubly so when I was so culpably careless in what I did."

"Then mount and start homeward," said the Governor. "Doctor, take my horse and I'll wait for the others to find us."

"Not at all, sir!" replied Marcus, on whom, in spite of his opposition, the dignity of the Governor of Rupert's Land was making an impression. "With your permission, I'll send my wife on with you and I'll remain with Malcolm to bring in the herd."

"Very well!" agreed the Governor, "if Madam Whitman consents."

Narcissa smiled and the Governor gave his horse its head, to make the shortest way out of the sagebrush. It was not until they were clear of the little valley and moving toward the beacon-light kindled at the fort, for their guidance—darkness had fallen by the time they had emerged—that either of the riders spoke.

Then Narcissa said quietly, "Lest we are not alone again, I will tell you now, Governor Simpson, that I must refuse, with thanks, your offer concerning the founding of the school."

"I'm exceedingly sorry to hear that," remarked the Governor. "Will you, perhaps, give me reasons?"

"I have many reasons, sir," replied Narcissa. "You know them all; loyalty to the American Board, to my husband's ambitions, to my religious convictions and his; to the religious convictions, most of all, so far as reasons go. But the immediate cause of the decision is anger."

"Anger?" repeated her companion.

"Yes, sir, anger! Anger at you! You stooped very low, Governor Simpson, when you stole our pitiful herd of live stock from us. I will not associate myself with a person or a concern that will so lower itself. More! I tell you that, if our animals are fit to travel to-morrow, we leave without supplies, for the Columbia."

"I did not steal your live stock, madam," declared Simpson, impatiently.

"You ordered it cached, for how long I do not know nor care," replied Narcissa.

"Do you realize what you are saying?" demanded the Governor.

"I do, indeed," answered Narcissa. "I realize that I'm making a powerful enemy for our future mission." She laughed a little sadly as she spoke. "And yet, we might have been great friends! One cannot lose that rarest of all the gifts of life, a true friend, without grief."

"You are quite correct," agreed Simpson, with a bitter note in his voice. "If you can endure it, madam, I'd be glad to spur to a gallop for the remaining way to the fort."

And nothing more was said during the ride.

Narcissa had made her peace with Eliza Spalding, who wept tears of gratitude over her friend's safe return, and had eaten her supper of jerked beef, before the men of the mission party returned. After the confusion of explanation and comment concerning Narcissa's escapade had died down, young Gray said, looking up from feeding the camp fire round which all but Mrs. Spalding were seated:

"Captain Thing warned me that the only way our women folks could hope for safety would be for us to kill Jo Buffalo."

"Our women folks are going to know safety from now on," declared Marcus. "I'm going to procure safe conduct for them back to the States, while we men go on and establish our mission. I've had my lesson."

William Gray heaved a vast sigh of relief. "That's the best news I've had for a long time! They can come by ship round the Horn, when we've made a place for them."

Henry Spalding looked from Marcus to William, from William to Narcissa. "Just for a year, perhaps," he said,

carefully. "Though it will be very difficult for me to get along without Eliza."

"Oh!" exclaimed Narcissa, looking half sadly, half reproachfully at the men. "Oh! Why was I so stupid as to wander off as I did? You must all of you try to believe that I've had my lesson and that I don't have to be sent home like a naughty child. Nor ought you to punish Mrs. Spalding for my carelessness."

"It's not a question of punishment, Narcissa," said the doctor, "I'm terrified! Only the grace of God saved you to-day from worse than death."

"The grace of God, working through Miles Goodyear." Narcissa was a little pale as she made the addition. "I was very, very culpable in my heedlessness, Marcus. I promise you that it will not happen again."

"I'm sure you never will stray again," replied Marcus, "but that's not the end of the matter. We are going to live among these savages and it's evident that the warnings of Thing and the Governor were based on knowledge. The red brutes are going to pursue you white women."

"Marcus," Narcissa's voice was tense,—"I can't go back! All the interest, all the hopes of my life are centered on the founding of the mission. You need us. Henry has admitted that."

"But aren't you afraid for yourself, Mrs. Whitman?" asked William Gray.

"Terribly afraid," admitted Narcissa. "But more afraid to go back to the States with my work undone. Danger or no danger, none of you has a right to ask it of me."

Her low voice broke and she paused. How could she explain to these three that, in spite of the really horrible experience of the afternoon, she had a greater dread of Angelica than of the Columbia country; that she could not possibly return to the emptiness and grief that dogged her there; that the gleam of a great task beckoned her, greater

far than she had realized it to be, before she had met the Governor of Rupert's Land; that, since meeting him, the sense that a deeply significant combat impended, had roused her every fighting faculty, and that, with Simpson leading the opposing forces, she knew, instinctively, he had selected her as leader of her side. Well, he should not be disappointed!

"After all," she said aloud, "I am a responsible human being with a right to make my own decisions, disposing of my own life. I choose to go on."

"But, Narcissa—" began the doctor, impatiently.

"Please, Marcus," interrupted Narcissa. "Don't let's argue about it. We settled our plans last March, in Angelica. Were they based on so trivial a foundation that we can cast them aside at the first breath of danger?"

"I'm with you, Narcissa!" exclaimed Henry Spalding, with so unwonted a note of approval in his harsh voice that every one looked at him in astonishment. "And Eliza'll do what I tell her to."

"You've made greater progress in wife training in your five months of marriage than I have in mine!" exclaimed the doctor, laughing ruefully and looking at Narcissa, with an expression half admiring and half reproachful.

"What condition is the live stock in?" she asked suddenly.

"A little the better for their day of seclusion, I think," replied William Gray.

"Then let's start for Fort Boise in the morning," suggested Narcissa. "We're no worse off than we were for a week before we got here. They say we can buy salmon from the Digger Indians, farther along the Snake River, and perhaps venison too. If the Company can prevent their selling to us, then we can live on beef and find what grazing we can for the stock. Only let's go on."

"I'll agree to that on one condition." The doctor leaned toward Narcissa and his face was grimly determined in the

firelight. "That you begin to-morrow to learn the use of a gun and that you carry one with you constantly from this day forth, till we reach safety."

"I promise!" exclaimed Narcissa.

"What do we do about Jo Buffalo?" asked William Gray.

"Apply our accepted Indian policy to him," replied Narcissa. "Let us make every effort to entice him to our mission and convert him."

"Well, I hope my Indian policy is applicable to me and mine as well as to other folks," said Marcus. "But that Indian, never, if I can prevent it, will come within a hundred miles of our mission. Outside of that, I'm willing to leave him in the Lord's hands."

There was a moment's silence around the little fire. As Marcus spoke, Narcissa seemed to hear again Captain Thing's statement: "If you go among the Indians with your 'turn the other cheek' policy, instead of 'an eye for an eye,' you court the most terrible disaster." And, though it had been she who suggested the treatment of Jo Buffalo, a sudden awful qualm shook her at Marcus' acquiescence. But only for a moment. When she rose to say good-night, it was with a feeling of keen exhilaration. On the morrow the combat would begin.

CHAPTER IV

THE PILLAR OF FIRE

THE mission party breakfasted, at dawn, on venison steak and hot water. Immediately after, at Marcus' suggestion, Narcissa went to the fort, to present an official farewell for all.

She found the Governor, with his secretary and Captain Thing, early as it was, hard at work on accounts. He received her with the greatest formality and politeness, and, rather to her surprise, accepted without comment her announcement of the impending exodus. Narcissa left him, feeling not a little puzzled by his complacent attitude. She would have been enlightened could she have heard Simpson's reply to Captain Thing's protest.

"But, Governor, after your hurried journey, and all, to give in to them so tamely!"

"Not tamely, Captain! Only temporarily! After all, one could not treat a group containing Madam Whitman as one would a handful of cheap American traders. I was, I'll admit, absolutely certain that if I could reach her, in time to offer them a bribe, I could handle the matter easily. And I could have dealt with Whitman and Spalding, but not with Madam. Her motives are as complex as her husband's are simple."

"Do you mean, sir, that you've given up?" asked John Leslie. "I can't believe it, when I think of that mad journey of ours!"

"Given up!" ejaculated Simpson. "My mannie, you don't know me! I've only begun!" The Governor paused in his rapid stride up and down the crude room, and drew

himself to his full height. "An imbecile king robbed us of the Atlantic coast, but, mark ye, no careless, spineless Governor shall rob us of the Pacific coast. It's only a poltroon who thinks when the enemy has passed his first outpost that his kingdom is lost. Indeed, history shows us that some of the most decisive victories in the world have been won by enticing the enemy over the border, then surrounding him and forcing him to cut his way out. By the living God, these Whitmans, before I'm through with them, will be glad to escape to the States and to warn all America against the troubles that beset them!"

He paused, looking out the door into the burning sunlight, the dazzling light of early morning.

"Look at her!" he exclaimed, staring at Narcissa who stood near the stockade gates talking to Miles Goodyear. "Isn't that a figure of a woman for you! She'd grace a duke's hall, and because of, God, He knows, what destiny, she had to be born of some obscure, little ha'penny American judge, marry a coltish pioneer and give her beauty to keeping an adobe hut!"

No one answered him. The three men, each absorbed by his own thoughts, watched Narcissa until, with her hand on Miles' arm, she moved away. Then the Governor said with a sigh:

"Oh, well! We'll give her a send-off worthy of her mettle. John, have out the pipers when they leave," and he turned back to the lists of beaver packs.

Narcissa kept her hand on Miles' arm while she looked him over. "So your new duties have begun, Miles! And already you are in livery, as it were."

Miles, grinning broadly, looked down at his handsome deerskin tunic and trousers, at the beaded moccasins, the brace of pistols and the hunting knife.

"On the whole, since you won't come with us to the mission," Narcissa went on, "I'm glad you are to be with

the Hudson's Bay Company. Enemies to us as they insist on being, still one must admit that their methods produce men of a high order. Miles," abruptly, "I've said very little to you of what you did for me yesterday. What I want you to feel about it is this. I owe it to you that I still possess all that makes life worth while to a woman. I shall never, for one moment, day or night, forget that! And day and night, I shall be giving you the sort of loyalty and faith that your mother would give you if she were living. You have it in you, Miles, to grow to a very noble manhood. Don't let me ever grow to feel, will you, that I owe what I owe to a man who is any less than the finest there is in you to be?"

Miles was nearly as tall as Narcissa. He flushed a little as she began to express her sense of obligation, but before she had finished his young awkwardness dropped from him. He stood erect, gazing at her from a pair of very fine blue eyes that suddenly gleamed with tears.

"I promise I'll keep straight for you, Mrs. Whitman!" he exclaimed. "And I never break a promise."

"I know you don't," replied Narcissa. "Thank you, Miles." She bent forward and kissed him, gently. "Good-by, my boy! God keep you!"

The boy's lips quivered. "He will if you ask Him, I know!" he answered, unsteadily. Then he turned and bolted for the store in the stockade.

A few moments later, William Gray and Henry Spalding, on their emaciated saddle horses, rounded up the dozen heavily laden pack ponies and the little herd of milch cows, and started them northwestward, up the valley. Narcissa and Eliza Spalding, on a pair of very footsore pintos, followed, and a moment later Marcus shouted:

"Hi, Jennie! Up, Jewell!" and the old wagon racketed into line.

It seemed as if they might go without a gesture from

the fort; but when the wagon was well launched, four figures, in kilts, lined up in front of the stockade, and all the occupants of the fort appeared behind them. Above the shouts of Spalding and Gray at the head, above the creak-creak-creak of the old lady Conestoga, rose the shrieking of the bagpipes:

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
But when will he return?"

Until the gigantic growth of sagebrush hid the little cavalcade from sight, the piercingly sweet notes of the old song floated down the echoing valley. . . .

Five days later the missionaries pitched their camp near the American Falls of Snake River.

It had been rough going. Indescribably rough! Narcissa, sitting that night within sound of the falls, with her diary letter on her knee, was at a loss how to express in words to her father and mother the hazards and hardships that had beset them since leaving Fort Hall. For she had exhausted her vocabulary before making this plunge into the Snake River canyon! And now, with a country infinitely more difficult, infinitely wilder, than any they had seen before, she was left without means of expression!

They had made camp too late to fish for salmon that night, and Narcissa and Mrs. Spalding were hungry. The dried meat they had purchased from some Snake Indians they had met just after leaving Fort Hall, was dirty. Maggots were breeding in it and no amount of boiling could make it possible for the two women to enjoy it. The Indians had sold them pemmican, too, but although the men really enjoyed this universal food of the Rocky Mountain trails, the women folks' stomachs rebelled at the superfluity of buffalo

hairs it contained. It was extraordinarily nourishing, as well it might be, for it was made of dried buffalo meat pounded to a fibrous powder. After being mixed with tallow, practically all the meat of an entire animal was compressed into a small sack made of hide. But, in spite of its highly nourishing quality, Mrs. Spalding could not keep it on her delicate stomach, and Narcissa held her nose while she ate her share!

When, the next morning at dawn, several dirty Digger Indians appeared with salmon, both fresh and dried, they were received with enthusiasm. Marcus purchased several days' supply; all the Indians had for sale, in fact, and breakfast was a much enjoyed feast. From this time on, for ten days, they traveled near enough to the Snake to keep themselves fairly well supplied with this most delectable fish, and Eliza Spalding throve greatly on it.

For the most part, they kept to the left bank of that amazing river, which swoops through a canyon eight hundred miles long, with walls sometimes a mile high, a tortuous, menacing, unutterably beautiful stream, which added its inhospitality to the already heavy balance against the feeble little band that crept along its banks.

Now and again they were obliged to cross the Snake. They accomplished this with incredible labor and danger, sometimes on the backs of swimming horses, sometimes on a precarious raft, made of an elk-skin stretched over a pile of brush. Nor were they molested by Indians. It is difficult to account for this, for they were moving through country claimed by tribes who hated "Bostons." But although their camp was frequently visited by scowling braves who made much conversation among themselves, apparently about the two women, no harm was offered them. Narcissa, perhaps, gave the true reason for their immunity from attack. Writing in her diary, by the flickering camp light, she said:

"Was there ever a journey like this performed where the

sustaining hand of God has been so manifest? Surely the children of Israel could not have been more sensible of the pillar of fire by night than we have been of that Hand that has led us thus safely on."

Marcus, except for such slight help as he would allow Narcissa to give him, struggled alone with the wagon. Every day saw him a little more ragged, a little more worn, and, what worried him more than his own condition, saw Jennie and Jewell become so lame and so emaciated that their very kicks became only feeble suggestions of resentment. But no one heard the doctor complain; and at last, in reluctant admiration of his perseverance, even Henry Spalding ceased to jibe at him.

They reached Fort Boise, on a little river tributary to the Snake, about the middle of August. This was a fort by courtesy only. It was really a tiny camp, more like a horse corral than a place of defense, which had recently been established by the British company. It was occupied by Thomas McKay, the Hudson's Bay Company's factor, who had left Fort Hall a day before the mission party. The spot was as lonely as a raft in the wide ocean.

After their treatment at Fort Hall, no one had much hope that supplies could be procured here. But McLeod, who was stopping with McKay before proceeding to Fort Vancouver, sent to Narcissa, the evening they arrived, a half dozen fat ducks, a part of a great number his hunters had brought in that day.

The gift touched the missionaries deeply. They had expected nothing, and this bit of human kindliness cheered them. It gave Marcus courage to approach McKay on the subject of Jennie and Jewell. After supper, he asked the factor to come out and examine the mules. Two pitiful heaps of bone and hide, they lay in the sagebrush, with strength only to raise their heads for an occasional bite of the wild hay Marcus had piled near them.

"Would you swap me these for a couple of horses, Mr. McKay?" asked Marcus.

But the factor shook his head. "I haven't an animal to spare, Doctor. Oh, come now!" as Marcus looked skeptical, "you must believe me! Examine my corral for yourself. Those little Indian ponies are too light for your purpose."

Marcus drew a long breath, and stared at the mules. He knew that only months of rest would make them fit again. And the factor was right, Indian ponies were useless.

"Leave the wagon and mules with me," suggested McKay. "I'll get them in shape for the use of them. When you can, return for them. Or else," as Marcus hesitated, "take the cart to pieces, wrap it up in 'parfleches' and pack it the rest of the way. My advice is, leave—" but he did not complete his sentence. Marcus was staring at Jennie and Jewell with an expression of grief that caused the factor to turn away as if on sudden business.

It was nearly dark when Narcissa found Marcus sitting on the ground with Jewell's head on his knee. He was talking to the mule in a low voice. Narcissa put her hand on the doctor's shoulder.

"I've been talking to Mr. McLeod," she said. "He insists that he cannot help us with fresh animals."

"I know," mumbled the doctor. "Well, I'll leave the outfit here. We're only two weeks from the Columbia, and it's to be clearly understood that I'll return for them."

Narcissa patted his drooping shoulder. "I know how you feel! I'll help you to return for old lady Conestoga. But don't misunderstand me, Marcus, when I say that, bitterly as I regret this frustration of your hope, I feel a certain relief. You are almost as tired as poor Jewell. Why, you don't look like the same man who asked me in January to marry him! You aren't, by any chance, a changeling, are you, Marcus?" with a whimsical smile.

Marcus sighed ruefully. "Perhaps I am. I know I'm a

much more dejected man than the one who asked you to marry him."

"Oh, but, Marcus, you mustn't begin to despond now! Why, the fight hasn't really begun!"

Marcus placed Jewell's pitiful head gently on the ground and rose. "The fight?" he repeated. "Oh, that doesn't trouble me!" He stared at his wife in the fading light. Travel-worn as she was, her beauty was undimmed. "Narcissa! Narcissa!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "When I was so sure I could make you love me, I was living in a fool's paradise."

Narcissa's fine hands came together with a gesture at once regretful and appealing. "Oh, don't say that! I was honest with you, Marcus, that January afternoon. I told you that I admired and respected you, and I told you that was all."

"Yes, you were honest, dear Narcissa," said Marcus, huskily. "I am not reproaching you. It's only that every day I live with you, I love you more. And—why, Narcissa, I'd be in heaven if you gave me a tenth of what plain little Eliza Spalding gives that cross-grained man of hers."

Narcissa's lips quivered. "I want to do and be all that can make you happy, Marcus!"

"I know you do! Don't misunderstand me. You are wonderful on the trail. It must be distasteful to you, but you don't complain and you are the life of the expedition, with your singing and all. Mrs. Spalding, good and kind as she is, can't hold a candle to you. It's just that—Oh, Narcissa, I love you! I love you! I love you!" With a despairing fling of his arm, he turned away.

For a long time, Narcissa stood motionless, then with a sigh that was almost a sob, she went into the tent.

The transfer of the handful of luggage that had been carried in the wagon was not accomplished without a good deal of conversation. All the way from the Missouri, the men had been leaving behind cherished boxes and packages,

learning, as they went, of the fearful cost to their pack animals of every pound. The wagon contained a few of Narcissa's personal belongings that she had clung to over all the doctor's protests, and their last tightening of the outfit was costing her dear. She was fairly resigned, however, until Marcus dumped the small trunk to the ground.

"I'll take the clothing out of that," she said, "and make it into small parcels for the pack horses."

"Leave my stuff," ordered the doctor. "I'll never want broadcloth or nankeen again!"

Narcissa, who was turning over the contents of the trunk which were wrinkled and mildewed from many wettings in many streams, looked up at her husband with an expression of irritation not often discernible in her sweet-tempered eyes.

"We are going to take your good clothes, Marcus! Out here, it will be absolutely necessary to fight for the amenities of life. Otherwise we'll all revert as have these men we see all about us. Most of them are no better than the Indians, in their personal habits. Part of the chore of women in this country will be to keep ideals of personal decency alive in the men."

"But broadcloth, Narcissa! It's absurd!"

"Very well," retorted Narcissa. "If you leave your good clothes behind, I'll leave mine. If you revert permanently to deerskin, so shall I!"

"You have me there!" laughed the doctor. "I couldn't bear not to see you in pretty clothes again, especially in the gray silk. You wore that the afternoon I proposed to you. I can see you now, standing beside the pianoforte, with the dress all billowy about you, and the white lace falling over your beautiful hands. You just fitted into that fine old parlor full of mahogany and books."

Marcus' eyes were suddenly filled with pain, then lowering his great voice, he said softly, "Keep your pretty things,

my dear wife, and take my broadcloth along, if it will make you any happier."

Thus it was that the gray silk and the blue broadcloth, with the nankeen trousers and flowered vest, made their way over the mountains to the Columbia.

Unencumbered by the wagon, their rate of travel was materially increased after leaving Fort Boise. They were much heartened, too, by the fact that Factor McLeod, with a considerable convoy, went with them. The missionaries were puzzled at first to know just why this was done, but they were not left long in doubt. The quiet Scotchman constituted himself something that was a combination of watchman and teacher. He expressed himself as scandalized by the tariff paid by the missionaries to the Digger Indians.

"You ruin everything, you Americans!" he groaned. "Either you must overpay the savages or you must debauch them and earn their hatred. You were given our scale of prices at Fort Hall. Why could you not have the good sense to follow it?"

"Because it seemed atrociously small," replied William Gray, flatly. "Two fish hooks for a twenty-pound salmon. That's not decent."

McLeod flushed. "You're to understand, sir, that the scale of prices worked out by the Hudson's Bay Company is the result of over a hundred and fifty years' experience in trading with Indians, years in which the Indians have been content. Our Company will not tolerate your coming in here and upsetting our trade."

"I don't see what you can do about it!" blurted Gray.

"We can refuse, ourselves, to sell you supplies," replied the Scotchman gravely.

"Oh, well, we expect that anyhow!" the young man shrugged his shoulders. The two were riding behind the pack animals. When Gray made his half-insolent gesture, McLeod silently rode ahead.

But this did not deter him from giving instructions on the Hudson's Bay Company's methods to Marcus, whenever opportunity occurred. And Marcus, that born mixer with men, listened, commented affably, and promptly forgot most of what was said. He had not the slightest intention of living according to the British company's program.

They climbed fierce ranges and descended into the lovely, mountain-encircled basin of the Grande Ronde. Here they gave their stock a full day's grazing, then toiled onward, into the Blue Mountains, the last range that lay between them and the valley of the Columbia. Of all the terrible ranges they had crossed, this seemed, to the weary little band, the most terrible. The very horses were afraid and trembled, as they stood sweating on the edge of the unspeakable descents. The poor brutes were unshod and their hoofs were split to the quick by the miles of broken stone over which they had been urged. And still, as the end of the journey was all but in sight, the beasts were urged on more pitilessly. A sudden desire for hurrying consumed the whole party. It was as if they were fearful lest, at the last, something should occur to mar the unbelievable good fortune that had attended them thus far. They made their camps hastily, omitting many of the details for comfort that hitherto had seemed so important. They took less care for the meals, rose before dawn and eliminated the noon rest, reaching their hastily chosen night camp after ten hours in the saddle, yet only subconsciously noting their great weariness. The Promised Land was just beyond the last seemingly impregnable wall that towered against the heavens.

At sunset, on the tenth day after leaving Fort Boise, they topped the last mountain. Far, far below and for a vast distance beyond, lay a great valley, cut from north to south by a silver ribbon, the Columbia. From the plains below, delicate lavender mists rose toward the heavens which were orange blue at the zenith and a fiery crimson toward the west,

where the sun had sunk behind the mountain range. From this range towered three gigantic, snow-capped peaks.

For a moment the travelers paused, eyes tear-dimmed, to take in this view of the Promised Land, then they plunged down the mountain side and camped in the valley.

Factor McLeod had a suggestion to make, when they reached the valley. All the pack animals, even his own, were too weary to keep up the terrific pace, which he, for reasons of his own, had been only too glad to keep, when it had been set by the missionaries.

The mission group had finished supper when the factor strolled up with his suggestion.

"I must be in Fort Vancouver," he said, "in seven days' time. We still are forty miles from Fort Walla Walla. It will take the pack animals three days to cover that. And poor Mrs. Spalding is not fit to move at a faster pace than the pack train. Why should not Dr. Whitman and Madam Whitman come on with me, on our freshest horses, to-morrow, reaching the fort to-morrow night? That will permit me to introduce at least a portion of your party to Mr. Pierre Pambrun, the factor in charge, and take part in the conference."

"What conference, Captain McLeod?" asked Marcus.

"As to where you are to establish your missions," replied McLeod, coolly.

"I don't want that conference held without me being there!" exclaimed Henry Spalding.

"I see no necessity for such a conference," said William Gray, his face flushing with indignation.

Narcissa eyed the Scotchman, thoughtfully. Ever since leaving Fort Boise, she had been puzzling over the problem of McLeod's attitude toward them. Undoubtedly, he was acting under orders from Governor Simpson. Evidently, one of those orders was that the missionaries were to be constantly under the eye of a Hudson's Bay employee and

McLeod, now pressed for time, was finding that order difficult to interpret, literally. He returned her keen look with one equally keen.

"What do you say, Madam Whitman?" he asked.

"Let me consult Mrs. Spalding, before I express myself," replied Narcissa, rising and going into the tent, where Eliza already was in bed. Narcissa had developed a real affection for this delicate, patient woman, and had learned, also, that her common-sense verdicts were usually unassailable. Seating herself on the ground beside Eliza, she stated McLeod's proposition to her.

It was twilight within the tent; but, even in that dim light, the two women managed to exchange a look of singular intelligence.

"Do you think that conference had better be, Sister Whitman?" asked Eliza.

"It will be very enlightening, I think, as to the purposes of the Hudson's Bay Company," replied Narcissa. "And you know, somehow, we must have supplies. We'll die before we can procure things from the Sandwich Islands. Do you recollect that our plows and garden implements were all left at Fort Laramie with the understanding that we could buy from Fort Vancouver?"

"I know," sighed Eliza. "Well, there's just this much about it! If all three of our men attend the conference, there'll be a fight. I'll keep Henry here. You take the doctor and go ahead. Tell 'em I'm too sick to move. Which I really am! I suppose William Gray will do as he pleases."

"No, he won't!" laughed Narcissa. She rose and returned to the camp fire, where she took her place beside Marcus. "Mrs. Spalding," she said, "feels that it will be impossible for her to hurry ahead, but she thinks the conference is a good idea. So, if it is essential that you shepherd at least a portion of our band as far as Fort Walla Walla, Captain McLeod, the doctor and I, if he is willing, can gallop on

with you, to-morrow. Mr. Gray is, of course, secular agent in charge of supplies, so his place is here, and as he is opposed to the er—overlordship of the Hudson's Bay Company, you must not be offended if he insists on being consistent and refusing to leave his appointed task."

William Gray scratched his head, but said nothing. Marcus, with a remote twinkle, nodded and threw more buffalo chips on the fire. Henry Spalding muttered something to himself and hurried into the tent. He was seen no more that night.

CHAPTER V

FORT VANCOUVER

BEFORE sun-up, the next morning, Narcissa, Marcus, and Factor McLeod were galloping over the plains toward Fort Walla Walla. They reached it early on the following day.

This fort was a much more substantial affair than Fort Hall. It stood near the spot where the Walla Walla joined the Columbia, the great thickets of scrub willow and cottonwood having been cleared away to prevent any one approaching the stockade under cover. The stockade was built of driftwood logs and was oblong in shape, with bastions at the southwest and northeast corners, in which were cannon. Within the stockade was a corral for a hundred horses, with several houses, a trading store and blacksmith shop. The houses were single-room, thatched-roofed affairs, well floored, with a comfortable adobe fireplace, and a glass window.

To such a house Pierre Pambrun, who had met the party at the gates, conducted Narcissa and the doctor. The French factor was, to Narcissa's surprise, not small and dark, but a tall, fair-haired man. He had, too, the suave, courteous manner that seemed to her to be a hallmark of the British Company. Standing before the fireplace, in his living room, was an Indian woman, with two half-breed girls beside her.

"Madam Whitman, may I present my wife," said Pambrun, "and two of my daughters, Maria and Julia."

The Indian woman, a comely person, in European clothing, greeted Narcissa and the doctor with self-possession

and in French. When Narcissa replied in the same tongue, however, the self-possession gave place to a laugh of excitement.

"You speak my husband's tongue! Oh, that is such happiness! We have been hearing about you for many days—of your golden hair!"

"You must pardon my wife's excitement!" exclaimed Pambrun. "You are the first white woman she ever saw." He was pulling out a crude chair from the table, as he spoke. "We waited breakfast for you, you will see."

"You are very kind," said Marcus, wondering very much whether Pambrun's cordiality was the result of orders or of his own hospitable impulse.

McLeod, coming to the meal a few minutes later, caused him to be enlightened.

"I've been giving orders about the boats, Pierre," he said. "I must leave at dawn to-morrow. Letters for Dr. McLoughlin. I want to take Dr. and Madam Whitman with me."

Narcissa and Marcus did not permit themselves to show their surprise.

"A runner brought me word from Dr. McLoughlin, yesterday," said Pambrun, "telling me to show every hospitality to this mission party, and to invite them to settle here and on the Clearwater."

Factor McLeod's gray eyes filled with consternation. "But, Pierre," he cried, "that's—" He stopped abruptly.

Narcissa looked up with a little laugh. "Quite right, Captain! I don't blame you for protesting. I'm confused myself. One order is to starve us. The other is to entertain us. Dr. McLoughlin and Governor Simpson really ought to have a single policy. But since they haven't—why not permit the doctor and me to dispose of our own lives?"

Pambrun laughed. "You are not unreasonable, madam, I see!"

"Among what Indians would Dr. McLoughlin's invitation place us, Mr. Pambrun?" asked Marcus.

"The Cayuse and the Walla Wallapoos, in this neighborhood," replied the Frenchman, "and the Nez Percés, on the Clearwater."

"Fine!" cried Marcus. "I agree at once and as far as I'm concerned, the conference is ended!"

"But not as far as I'm concerned," insisted McLeod. "Governor Simpson was explicit in expressing his desire that Dr. and Madam Whitman visit Fort Vancouver."

"And I suppose," said Pambrun, "that we must give precedence to the desires of the Governor."

"I'm not a citizen of Rupert's Land," declared Marcus, baldly. "I'm an American, and by the eternals, I'll settle where I please! It happens that Dr. McLoughlin and I desire the same thing. Better let it alone, McLeod."

"I would not care to visit Fort Vancouver without the Spaldings and William Gray," said Narcissa. "I don't quite understand Governor Simpson's idea in dividing our party."

"It would cost more than twice as much to take the whole party to Fort Vancouver," said McLeod.

Narcissa laughed. "You make good use of your reputation for Scotch thrift, Captain!"

"I think it is in every way desirable that you accede to the Governor's wishes in this," urged McLeod.

"We might accept the invitation later," said Narcissa, "but, certainly, we cannot do so until the rest of the missionaries arrive."

"I'm going out and choose a site for a mission, to-morrow," declared Marcus. "I want a roof over my wife's head before the winter rains begin."

"Perhaps the Spaldings will wish to settle here," suggested Narcissa, "and will ask us to go to the Clearwater."

"Even in that case," returned the doctor, "there will be a distinct saving in time, by my having gone over the ground."

Factor McLeod moved uneasily, but at the moment made no further protest. When dinner was over, the Whitmans were allowed to withdraw to one of the bastions, where two bunks had been placed for them beside the cannon. They sat down on the cots, facing each other.

"Whew!" breathed Marcus. "What a relief to be alone for a few moments! Narcissa, we are never alone, particularly since the Hudson's Bay Company discovered us."

Narcissa nodded. "I know! Marcus, don't you think we'd better go on to Fort Vancouver?"

"I don't see why!" cried the doctor. "That man Simpson must think he's an Emperor!"

"He is, as far as Rupert's Land is concerned," replied Narcissa.

"This isn't Rupert's Land," retorted Marcus.

"I wonder what are the boundaries of Rupert's Land," said Narcissa. "I shall ask one of the factors, this evening. My reason for thinking we ought to go to Fort Vancouver is this, Marcus: From all we can discover, Dr. McLoughlin is friendly to Americans. Why, I can't imagine, when his Company is so violently opposed to them. But evidently, there is friction between Governor Simpson and his Chief Factor on the Pacific Coast. If we are to work intelligently here, it seems to me, we must try to get them to agree on what they want us to do. If Dr. McLoughlin is the stronger, the verdict will be as Mr. Pambrun gave it, this afternoon. If Governor Simpson is stronger, we shall, at least, know where we stand with the Company, because he will be obliged to state his position."

"In other words," said Marcus, thoughtfully, "your idea is that the much talked of conference be held at Fort Vancouver, with all our party there, instead of here, with only you and me."

"Exactly!" replied Narcissa. "But also, with Governor Simpson. For I have no doubt he plans to be there shortly."

"He must be planning so," mused Marcus. "That is the important place on his inspection trip. But, Narcissa, why do you suppose he wanted us to go to Fort Vancouver?"

"I imagine he has some new form of bribe to offer us," replied his wife. Then she laughed. "It will be interesting to learn what it is."

"Interesting, yes!" exclaimed Marcus, impatiently. "But Narcissa, all this isn't converting Indians! This opposition and delay is very irritating to me."

"I don't see how we are to do effective work with the savages," said Narcissa, "unless we know how we stand with these British. I am surprised that the American Board did not inform itself and us before sending us out here."

Marcus gave an enigmatic grunt and took a restless turn or two up and down the tiny room. "Well, so be it, Narcissa! I suppose we'll have an awful time making young Gray fall into line, and Henry will fuss. But your ideas are sound and we will overpersuade them. I'm thinking they'll be in here rather early to-morrow. They're not going to linger along the way, with you and me enjoying the flesh pots of Egypt here."

At supper time that evening Marcus gave the result of the conversation in the bastion to the two factors, who received it without comment. Narcissa broke the rather unpleasant silence which followed the doctor's blunt statement by adding:

"By the way, Mr. Pambrun, will you forgive my ignorance and tell me what is the extent of Rupert's Land?"

Pambrun laughed. "That's more than mortal can do, madam."

"I can tell you what Charles II granted to Prince Rupert," said McLeod, "in 1670. He granted 'the sole trade and commerce of all the Seas, Streights, Bays, Rivers, Lakes, Creeks and Sounds in whatsoever latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the Streights commonly called

Hudson's Streights, together with all the Lands, Countries and Territories upon the Coasts and Confines of the Seas, Streights, Bays, Lakes, Rivers, Creeks and Sounds aforesaid, which are not now actually possessed by any of our subjects. . . .'"

"Well," exclaimed Marcus, with his great laugh, "he was a liberal giver, your King Charles II; but, liberal as his gift was, your Company has been even more liberal in its interpretation. None of the seas and straits of Oregon territory empty into Hudson's Bay."

"We never claimed they did," said the Scotchman placidly. "But we certainly have prior rights of occupancy in Oregon."

And Narcissa and Marcus, with their lack of better information, were obliged to allow this statement to stand.

Marcus' prophecy was a true one regarding the movements of the rest of the convoy and missionaries. It was only midmorning when the stockade gates were thrown open to receive them. Their arrival was the signal for protracted and heated discussion, but it finally was agreed that all but necessary personal luggage should be stored at Fort Walla Walla and that the party should proceed by boat to Fort Vancouver. But not as guests of the Hudson's Bay Company! They would pay as they went. And at dawn, the following day, they started.

Mr. Pambrun, for reasons which he did not give, decided to accompany the party. Narcissa and Marcus, who had taken an immediate liking to the curly-haired Frenchman, were glad to have him go. There would have been room in the thirty-foot, six-oared boat for still other unexpected guests, after Pambrun was seated beside Henry Spalding: this, despite the fact that great packs of furs occupied the center of each boat.

It was a trip of such ease that it seemed to the missionaries utterly disconnected with the previous part of their journey. Sitting for five days in the superbly managed craft,

the missionaries watched the shores of the Columbia. In the placid east, the land through which this river was flowing would have been called mountainous. But, so stupendous was the whole geographical scale of this Oregon territory, that McLeod explained to them that they were passing through the *plains* of the Columbia! A vast plain, indeed, built of lava which had flowed westward from the Blue Mountains and eastward from the Cascades, lava which had bubbled and burst, which had cooled and gaped in a thousand terrible shapes, lava which had been glaciated and flooded, upheaved and weathered, for countless eons. Plains, indeed! The river was sweeping through chaotic ranges, above whose general level rose the enchanting, snow-crested peaks of isolated mountains, whose serene grandeur dwarfed all other details of the landscape.

The boats swung now through barren banks that gave way in a thousand prismatic tints to wide views of plain and peak. Now mighty canyon walls hemmed them in and the quiet murmur of the river rose to a deafening roar. Here the river widened to lake-like placidity, there it leaped narrowly in whirlpool and cataract. Fantastic rock walls gave place again and again to forests of enormous trees. Deer and elk gazed at the rushing boats. Crane, wild duck and geese flew thick among the reeds of the lagoons and salmon leaped from the waters churning at the prows. It was a country for the gods.

Near noon of the fifth day after leaving Fort Walla Walla, they swung into the broad reaches of the waters before Fort Vancouver. Two ships, flying the British flag, lay at anchor in midstream. The fort was located on a beautiful, fertile slope rising for about two miles from the river. Great trees bounded it on the land side. Mount Hood stood, a snow-capped sentinel, sixty miles to the east, the wonderful Willamette valley stretched southward, and all the hundred miles westward to the Pacific was a harbor of unparalleled beauty.

The fort, itself, covered about eight acres, surrounded by a log stockade twenty feet high. Inside were over forty buildings, with the Chief Factor's house in the center. There were two chapels, a schoolhouse, bachelors' halls, stores and workshops. On the river bank, outside, were cottages for married employees, a hospital, granary, boathouses, threshing mills and dairies. And in every direction, the farm lands; fifteen hundred acres in the finest state of productivity, three thousand head of cattle, two thousand sheep, three hundred brood mares and a hundred milch cows. Dr. McLoughlin did, indeed, as Governor Simpson had told Narcissa, live in lordly splendor.

When the missionaries were admitted through the great gate, with its brass locks, he was standing at the door of his residence to welcome them: an enormously tall man of about fifty-two, with long, prematurely white hair, flowing back over his shoulders. He wore blue broadcloth and lace-trimmed ruffles. And as he stood with a cordial hand extended, Narcissa noted that, in the hall back of him, were cannon that commanded the gate.

McLeod performed the introductions, and whatever may have been the Chief Factor's feelings on being faced with the five unexpected visitors, he gave no sign of annoyance, or even of surprise. His greeting was courtly, the welcome of a feudal lord to honored guests.

A great bell in the yard rang as they stood at the door, and instantly the fort was alive with men.

"'Tis exactly the dinner hour!" exclaimed Dr. McLoughlin. "Come to the table! Mr. Gray, will you go with Mr. Pambrun and Mr. McLeod, please?"

Gray, with a look of surprise that was tinged with resentment, followed the factor to the employees' dining room, while Dr. McLoughlin led the others to the great dining hall, where a hundred guests could have been comfortably seated. However, only four persons were gathered near a

round table set before the huge fireplace. Dr. McLoughlin introduced them. Mr. Beaver was a clergyman who, with his wife and her companion, had recently arrived by ship from England. A tall, dark man, booted and spurred, with a quick, rather aggressive manner, was James Douglas, Dr. McLoughlin's protegé and right hand, in the great task of ruling Oregon territory.

When Dr. McLoughlin had seated the company to his own satisfaction, he waved his hand and a group of men servants began to serve the dinner. There was an elaborate menu of soup, fish, game, roast, pastry, fruit and wines.

When the meal was well launched, Dr. McLoughlin turned to Marcus. "You did not, then, receive my message at Fort Walla Walla?"

"Yes, Doctor," replied Marcus, "Pambrun delivered your message and we were grateful for it. But, unfortunately, Governor Simpson had directed McLeod to bring Mrs. Whitman and myself here. In the face of contrary invitations, we decided to accept the Governor's, in the hope that he would arrive about this time and that a satisfactory agreement could be reached."

Dr. McLoughlin's eyes were stormy, but his voice was calm enough as he nodded. "I understand, sir! And what, may I ask, are your plans?"

Marcus told of the desire of the American Board to found two permanent missions among the Oregon Indians.

"What are your policies, Dr. Whitman?" asked the Chief Factor. "Are they such as Jason Lee pursues on the Willamette, in the Methodist mission he has established there?"

"I don't know Lee or his policies," replied Marcus.

"The Reverend Mr. Lee," Dr. McLoughlin gave the title sonorously, "has done me the honor to follow very closely my suggestions. For example, we have on this coast, from time to time, sailors who leave the Hudson's Bay Company's ships and desire to take up land. These men, Jason Lee has

persuaded to marry native women and settle at the mission, where they now have a thriving farm."

"I certainly would not help them to marry natives," declared Henry Spalding, suddenly.

"What would you do, sir?" thundered the Chief Factor. "Would you countenance their living in adultery and breeding nameless children?"

"No, I would not!" Spalding blushed furiously.

"'Tis either one or the other," declared McLoughlin. "Human nature is human nature. This is no country for white women and men must live like men, not monks. You are the clergyman of this group, sir?"

"I am," returned Spalding, lifting his sallow chin. "And I wish to state, from the beginning, that I will not countenance the loose living I see indulged in by white men everywhere in Oregon."

"And will you not, indeed?" exclaimed McLoughlin, every white hair on his head seeming to lift as he glared at the hapless Spalding. "You and Mr. Beaver should be in accord, though I've not yet had the privilege of hearing our chaplain's opinion of us, first hand."

Mr. Beaver, a small man, with gray eyes and sandy hair, clad in the impressive black garb of a clergyman of the Church of England, had been listening to the conversation with an unmistakable air of disdain. When meeting Spalding, he had acknowledged the introduction by an almost imperceptible nod of his head. His arrogance toward the bigoted Henry had almost convulsed Narcissa and Marcus, both of whom Beaver had ignored, except for a very slight raising of his brows.

McLoughlin turned his glare from Spalding to his chaplain and went on: "My idea of the duties of a minister, be he priest, missionary, or appointed chaplain like Beaver here, is to visit the sick, hold service on Sundays, give doles to the poor, and, otherwise, to mind his own business."

"So missionaries are quite without the pale with you, Dr. McLoughlin!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Then, indeed, your courtesy and hospitality are doubly appreciated by all of us! We have heard of the delights of Fort Vancouver, ever since leaving Fort Laramie. We are fortunate to have a glimpse of them."

Mr. Beaver suddenly laughed. "Delights! That's good! That's excellent! You Americans have such curious ideas! Delights!"

"And who are you, sir, to laugh at a guest of mine?" demanded the Chief Factor.

The clergyman returned Dr. McLoughlin's stare without blinking. "I? Sir, I am chaplain in charge of Fort Vancouver, by virtue of powers vested in me by Sir John Pelly, Governor of the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company of London."

"Are you, indeed!" boomed McLoughlin. "Well! Well! All that for one small mannie! Jamie!" turning to James Douglas, who sat silently devouring his dinner, "Jamie, are you not impressed?"

"Divil a bit!" replied Douglas. "I may be a laird one day mysel'."

Something in the manner of the Chief Factor and the Chief Trader threw Mr. Beaver off his balance. He rose in his place and pointed a trembling forefinger at McLoughlin, while his voice lifted shrilly.

"Then allow me to state my position more clearly. I find myself chaplain to a man of alien faith, a Catholic, a man who is uncivil, whose clerks are boors. None of you are sufficiently enlightened to understand my sermons or to conform to the service. You are half savages, who don't know the difference between a prayer-book and an otter skin! You, yourself, sir,—you should not delay another day in requiring me to marry you to the person who calls herself Madam—"

Before he could utter the last word, Dr. McLoughlin had leaped from his place, had seized Mr. Beaver by the collar and ignominiously booted him from the room.

A dead silence greeted the Chief Factor as he seated himself again. "I've been wanting to do that for a month," he said, pouring himself some port.

Mrs. Beaver burst into sobs and rushed from the table. Dr. McLoughlin looked after her, with a comical raising of his white brows. "And that will be an end of that, Jamie, I hope!" he said. "Let Sir John Pelly try another bit of absurdity of the same kind, and my patience won't last a month. Ladies, pray try some of this fruit."

The stupefied missionaries recovered themselves and attacked the wonderful plate of peaches and grapes.

Dr. McLoughlin ate a bunch of grapes meditatively, then began in a gently reflective manner:

"The situation as to missionaries is this: We are very much in need of instruction, both religious and lay, for the children of the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. Our women folks very much need instruction in the manners and arts of white women. You can see that our superiors in London have no understanding of our needs. Mr. Beaver and his wife have managed to insult every soul in the fort from myself down to the smallest half-breed boy, running cloutless in the sun. My experience with the Reverend Jason Lee has proved to me that I have little chance to persuade you to settle here, which is what I would earnestly recommend and desire. My alternative is that you settle, as I suggested, near Fort Walla Walla. And that you devote yourselves, not to teaching the impossible savage to become an improbable farmer, but to Christianizing and educating the selected groups of women and children we shall send you from time to time. Oh, of course, preach gospel to the Indian—but that you will find futile work. He is born and will die, as long as he is a pure blood, a pantheist."

"The idea being," said Marcus slowly, "to keep us dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company!"

"On whom else can you be dependent?" asked the Chief Factor, benevolently.

On whom else indeed! Dr. McLoughlin allowed the idea to sink in, for a few moments, before he said: "There is plenty of time to debate all these matters. I want you to see our farms and the dairies. Fresh horses will be at the door in an hour. In the meantime, I wish you ladies to meet Madam McLoughlin. Ian," to the butler, "take the ladies to the Madam's room."

Narcissa and Eliza followed obediently after Ian, up the stairs and along the hall, to an open door. Within was a room hung with skins and furnished with the usual buffalo-hide chairs. A middle-aged woman of swarthy skin, wearing a flowing black silk dress, stood beside the window. She looked at her two guests questioningly, wistfully, but made no move to greet them. Narcissa thought suddenly of Mrs. Beaver and the probable snubbing Madam McLoughlin had received at her hands. She was, herself, conscious of being offended by the whole situation, yet her heart went out to the half pleading, half tragic expression in the woman's eyes.

"She doesn't know what white women's standards are," said Narcissa under her breath to Eliza, "and you can readily believe that the men will not have undeceived her. The Beavers have frightened her."

Ian put another log on the fire, bowed and went out. Narcissa, followed by Eliza, slowly crossed the room, holding out her hand.

"Madam McLoughlin," she said, "I am Mrs. Whitman and this is my friend, Mrs. Spalding. You are kind to have us here. It does seem wonderful after the rough trip from the States!"

A sudden glow lifted the half-breed woman's face to beauty. "You lak' it here? I am so glad! Madam Beaver

say it the home of savag' and adul—adult—I cannot remem' that word. It mean me and all Indian wife, m' bad."

"It is just fine here," said Eliza Spalding heartily. "Let's sit down and have a good talk. I'm dying to know how you manage about butter making here. Some one said you could really make sweet butter in a hide!"

Madam McLoughlin pulled three chairs together eagerly. "Yes! Yes! I know all about such matter! And keep the bee, too. That you must do, also."

"And the babies?" asked Narcissa. "How do the Indians feed them when there is no mothers' milk?"

"That I know, too!" Madam McLoughlin sighed, ecstatically. "I lak' you both. You mak' me feel I know much."

The three women laughed together.

An hour later, Dr. McLoughlin appeared in the door, where he stood for several moments absolutely unheeded, even by his usually adoringly attentive mate. She was holding forth on the Indian care of babies and, except for an occasional question, Eliza and Narcissa listened without interruption.

An extraordinary look of gratification spread over the doctor's face.

"Well! Well! What's this? A lecture?" he demanded.

Madam McLoughlin ran toward him. "Doctor!" she exclaimed, "these white ladies are not lak' that other one. They lak' it here. They lak' me. I see it in their eyes."

"Madam McLoughlin is a perfect mine of information about all the things we most want to know," said Narcissa. "And she's been so good about answering all our stupid questions!"

"Your school's been established the other way round, Doctor," said Eliza, with a smile.

The Chief Factor returned the smile. "Can you tear yourselves away to come for the ride?"

Narcissa turned quickly to the half-breed woman. "Then you can show us that patch of flax yourself!"

McLoughlin gave Narcissa a keen look, that had something very like gratitude behind it. Madam McLoughlin clasped her hands and gazed pleadingly at her lord.

"Please, Doctor, if Madam Beaver is not there!"

Dr. McLoughlin nodded. "Hurry then, Meg! We will await you in the great hall."

That was a memorable ride, covering fifteen miles, over the great farm and its environs. It must have been a memorable picture too, that of the little group of sightseers. Dr. McLoughlin, ahead on a great black horse, his beaver hat glistening in the sun; Madam McLoughlin riding astride, her skirts lifted by the high saddle to display a plump leg encased in Indian leggings; Narcissa, with her graceful seat and sweeping broadcloth habit; Eliza, with her meager skirt, her black sunbonnet, jogging uncomfortably but clinging uncomplainingly to the gallop at which Dr. McLoughlin led; Marcus, in the broadcloth on which Narcissa had insisted, a powerful, aggressive figure of a man; and Henry, in his clerical black, hunched over his horse's neck, his eyes sedulously avoiding Madam McLoughlin's comfortable calves.

They swept in at the gates at supper time, at the same gallop at which they had left them. And they had only just seated themselves at the evening meal, at which, incidentally, the Beaver family did not appear, when a thunder of the cannon at the gate brought them to their feet.

"Governor Simpson is arriving," said Dr. McLoughlin quietly. "You will pray excuse Mr. Douglas and myself for a time."

It was a long time. The missionaries finished their supper and retired to their respective rooms and went to bed, tired out by the day's excitements. And during that time, save for deep voices that sounded continuously from the Chief

Factor's office, they heard nothing from their host or his distinguished guest.

The two gentlemen were, as the missionaries supposed, deep in a discussion of the possible and feasible disposal of the Whitman party. They sat before a softly glowing fire, a decanter of wine between them, long after the rest of the fort, even Bachelors' Hall, was in darkness. It was nearing midnight when Simpson ran his hand wearily through his hair and said:

"We have arrived exactly where we started! You are the most obstinate man on earth, McLoughlin. Now then, let us coolly and clearly state our positions and see if we cannot compromise. I do not wish, unless forced to it, to use my authority."

"Do you not, indeed!" grunted the Chief Factor enigmatically. "Well, as I've been saying, repeatedly, you do not appreciate the extent of my hold on this country."

"Is it your hold or the Company's hold?" asked the Governor.

Dr. McLoughlin brought his fist down on the table. "I am the Company in Oregon!"

The two men eyed each other, the doctor's black eyes, red with anger, the Governor's gray eyes, cold and clear as ice.

"Get on with your tale, man," said the Governor, finally.

"Well, then, that being understood, I recapitulate. 'Tis inevitable that this country be settled by farmers. The land cries for cropping. You say you must have two years in which to handle the Congress. I am trying to give you those two years. I broke that clever American, Wyeth, and sent him out of the country after he'd established Fort Hall. I could not do the same with Jason Lee. He came round the Horn with a shipload of supplies. A *shipload,* mind you! Would you have me murder the man? He was no trader like Wyeth. Money could not buy him, for I tried it. He

actually wanted to save souls! Very well, if he must save souls let him do it as our unacknowledged agent! I sent him as far south of the Columbia as he would go."

"You should have kept him here in the fort," said Simpson.

"He would not stay, as I have repeatedly told you. I settled him on the Willamette and I encouraged him to gather about his mission the handful of American and British whites in the country, marry them to natives and keep his hands on them. Therefore, I have in one spot, where at any time I may surround them by near a thousand half-breeds who would bear arms for the Hudson's Bay Company, all the farmers west of the Rockies and north of California. Jason Lee is absolutely under my thumb."

"He escaped long enough to entice Officer Slacum to his mission," said Simpson coldly.

"Who said 'twas Lee?" demanded McLoughlin.

"I say it was!" declared the Governor. "Next to the arrival of the Whitmans, Slacum's our greatest mishap yet. Where is he now?"

"Exploring, I believe. When a man arrives, well found in his own ship, I cannot starve him."

"I admit that. But did you need to invite him here, to answer his questions, to loan him maps?"

"I needed to educate him as to the power and purpose of the Hudson's Bay Company. I needed to discourage him as to ever making his jackass Congress see Oregon as it is. I needed to delay him here, one year, two years, if possible, with soft blandishments."

"I respect your earnestness, McLoughlin," Simpson leaned forward and spoke gently. "But cannot I make you see that, beyond a certain point, diplomacy will not work in this situation? We are not fighting a rival commercial concern, as we were the Nor'westers in Rupert's Land. We are struggling to hold back the inevitable. The empires of the

world move westward by a force as irresistible as the march of the sun. Our one hope, our one chance, is to keep the American Government in ignorance until we have made this empire of the Columbia, British. Then let the American migration pour in here, and welcome. Diplomacy is not enough, Doctor. And the Whitmans—" He paused.

"Yes, what of the Whitmans? I had them located where Pierre Pambrun would manage them, could sicken them of their notion and, finally, entice them here to found your school or return them to the States. And you must rush them here to upset all my plans. Now that they are here, what am I to do? Kidnap them and send them to the Sandwich Islands?" sarcastically.

"Is Pambrun big enough for the job?" asked the Governor, ignoring the sarcasm. "Can he keep them isolated, counteract their influence on Indians and whites, alike, until I can exert pressure in Boston?"

"He and I can do that for a year, at least," replied McLoughlin. "I'll make a great effort to keep the women here for the winter. Madam Whitman would be extraordinarily useful. I would like her to act as governess to my daughter, Eloise. They say she is a fine musician and we can see that she is a gentlewoman. By the Lord Harry! how we need such a person here! But you must allow me to tie them to me with gratitude, Governor, by giving them supplies and compliments."

The Governor nodded. "How will Madam Beaver take this invasion?"

Dr. McLoughlin suddenly burst out laughing and gave his superior a rapid picture of the inadequacy of the Beaver family.

The Governor nodded. "I told Sir John he was a fool for his pains! Send them back to England by the 'Nereus.' Poor souls! 'Tis a ghastly trip round the Horn in that little ship! What do you think of Madam Whitman?"

"I like her!" McLoughlin nodded. "She'd better stay here than in a mud hut. She gave little Mrs. Spalding the cue and together they won Madam McLoughlin's heart."

Governor Simpson gazed long and thoughtfully into the fire. "Doctor," he said at last, "do you ever regret your exile?"

The keen-eyed Chief Factor favored the Governor with a quick look before he replied: "When I sat at table to-day with Madam Whitman, I did. With Madam Beaver, no, decidedly no."

The Governor rose and stood before the fire. "Keep them here, all winter, if you can, Doctor. When does the Spanish brigade start for California?"

"To-morrow, at dawn. We have a pack train of two hundred horses this time. William Rae is in charge. Here's a neat problem for you, sir! If it costs us fifty thousand pounds to keep the Americans out of Oregon, won't it cost a million to keep them out of California?"

"'Twould be worth it!" replied Simpson. "I'll start with Rae in the morning, Doctor. I want a look at the San Francisco situation. I'll come back by boat and will then attend to business here." Then, with that charming smile which no one could resist, he suddenly held out his hand to the Chief Factor. "McLoughlin, I've been mistaken in my judgment of you. You've been handling the situation better than I could have. All my attempts on the Whitmans have bungled."

McLoughlin shook the extended hand heartily. "Thank you, Governor! You are generous! But I'll be equally frank and say that I can't handle the California matter. That you must do and can do."

Simpson nodded. "I'll be on my way before you are well awake. I shall leave letters that must be pushed eastward 'on the king's business,' you know—all speed! And, McLoughlin, nothing must interfere with your program for the

missionaries. Madam Whitman is the pivot on which they all turn."

"She shall be here when you return, Governor," said the doctor, with a sudden broad grin.

Governor Simpson gave the Chief Factor a haughty look. "I'll be obliged to you, sir, if you'll have my secretary sent to me," he said.

But McLoughlin was still grinning as he rang the bell for Ian.

CHAPTER VI

MALCOLM CAMPBELL

SO it was that the missionary party heard the bagpipes the next morning, before they rose. But they did not so much as catch a glimpse of the Governor.

That day, after an extended conversation, it was agreed that the three men of the mission party would return at once with Pierre Pambrun to locate and start building the missions, while the women remained at Fort Vancouver. Narcissa felt uneasy about the decision, yet there was no sane argument to be brought against it. She and Eliza would only handicap the men by being with them during the exploration and building period. She thought it rather extraordinary, too, that Governor Simpson should have come and gone without a word to her. After all, he had declared a friendship for her in which, although he must be hostile to her interests, she had complete faith. Pondering on this she felt, suddenly, terribly alone in an alien land.

Pambrun was eager to return to his fort, where Thomas McKay was keeping house for him; so on the morning after the conference, the boats, loaded with freight and bearing the three men of the mission beside the factor, and his voyageurs, pushed out into the Columbia. It happened, not long before the launching, that Narcissa was alone with Henry Spalding, for the only time in many weeks.

Eliza was not able to go down to the shore to see the men off, so Narcissa went down alone, arriving there before Marcus had finished his purchases at the blacksmith shops. Henry was standing beside his own supplies, bought the night before. Narcissa leaned against a bulkhead and stared at the huge stockade.

"Henry," she asked, "how do you think our little adobe missions will compare, as fortifications, with this great affair?"

"We need no fortifications like this," declared Henry. "The Lord is our fortress."

"Oh, but, Henry!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Be practical! After years of experience, the Hudson's Bay Company has found this sort of thing absolutely necessary."

"You are afraid, I observe, Narcissa!" sneered Henry.

"Yes, I'm afraid," returned Narcissa quietly. Then she turned from the fort to a calm scrutiny of the preacher.

He returned her gaze with something warm, something resentful in the depths of his brown eyes. Yet Narcissa looked little enough like an object for resentment. Her tall figure, clad in the now shabby broadcloth, was more vigorously beautiful than ever. Her fine head, on which she wore a small beaver hat, held on by a velvet strap that passed under her chin, was lifted as proudly as though she were chatelaine of the great fort and not of a nameless hut in the wilderness.

After a moment's contemplation of him, Narcissa said: "Henry, don't you think it's time you forgave me for refusing to marry you?"

The resentment in the brown eyes deepened to anger. "Forgive? I'm glad you didn't marry me!"

Narcissa shook her head. "You are consistently hateful, Henry. And it's not as if I ever gave you hope. I refused you nearly a year before Dr. Whitman came to Angelica."

"I wouldn't have cared," Spalding burst forth furiously, "if you'd preferred that Harvard professor to me, the one that courted you last summer. At least I'd have lost to an equal. But a fellow like Marcus Whitman—"

Narcissa's cheeks turned a deep crimson. "Henry, you're not fit to black the doctor's boots! His physician's training

may not have made him as learned as you think you are—for after all, all you have is Biblical lore—and he loves a rough story and mixing with all manner of men, better than you do. But, Henry, take heed of this fact! For breadth of vision, for indefatigable energy and for usefulness to his country, he's as much your superior as you are superior to an Indian."

Spalding looked for a moment as if he could have struck her; then, as he stared at the handsome woman, a look of misery pierced his anger. "Oh, Narcissa, why did you marry Marcus in your despair and force me to marry a farmer's daughter I'd known only three weeks?"

"You persist in ignoring one thing, Henry," said Narcissa coldly. "And that is, there never was the remotest chance of my marrying you. I never injured you, except inadvertently," her voice softening at the look of pain in the man's eyes,—"so I can't ask you to forgive me. But I do ask you to believe that I grieve over your unhappiness and ask you to forget it in the ministrations of the really splendid woman who is your wife."

The preacher stared at Narcissa, abstractedly, as she spoke. When she had finished, he said with a depth of bitterness mere words cannot convey, "You have a lovely voice, even in speaking, and Whitman has no more ear than a crow. He can't even sing a hymn."

Narcissa made a gesture of impatience and turned with a feeling of relief to William Gray, who came up carrying two great carpet bags.

"Well, Mr. Gray," she exclaimed, "you have been invisible ever since we arrived at the fort! Why this intense preoccupation?"

"Preoccupation!" Gray raised his eyebrows comically. "That's a new name for it. Don't you know that I'm a mere *clark,* as they pronounce it here, and not your social equal?"

Narcissa laughed. "What do you mean? I thought you preferred Bachelors' Hall. The men seem to have great fun there."

"So they do," agreed William. "All the same, they are not considered good enough to eat at the Chief Factor's table. I call it an insult, the way Dr. McLoughlin detached me from our party. Don't tell me you haven't observed the careful enforcement of the caste system here!"

"To tell you the truth," admitted Narcissa, "I've been so absorbed by the various aspects of our problem that I've not given it a thought."

"Haven't you wondered that neither Madam McLoughlin nor Madam Douglas ate with you?"

Narcissa flushed a little. "They are half-breeds and—" She hesitated, as she thought of the dignity and sweetness of Madam McLoughlin.

Gray laughed as he finished for her. "Call them the morganatic wives of King McLoughlin and Prince Douglas! If they are good enough to bear the children that McLoughlin and Douglas have sent to England to be educated, they ought to be good enough to break bread with their majesties. However, that's not my worry! You see, as a servant, I've picked up a lot of below-stairs gossip. For example, there are two classes in the Hudson's Bay Company, master and servant. Any one that comes into Oregon without written credentials is looked on by them as a vagabond and is treated accordingly. By Jove, such an attitude is intolerable to an American!"

"I wish I'd known this sooner!" exclaimed Narcissa. "I'd have done my best to remedy it as far as you were concerned. When you return to get us, you shall see!"

"Don't bother about it," said William in a mollified voice. "As long as you didn't wilfully neglect me, I don't mind so much."

Narcissa laughed. "Poor dear William! When you come

back, I shall refuse my meals unless you are seated opposite me!"

"My sense of insult is gone!" chuckled Gray. "Where is Dr. Whitman?"

"There he comes!" Narcissa moved forward to meet the doctor. He dropped his many parcels and, taking her hands, drew her out of earshot of the others.

"Narcissa, I leave you with a heavy heart, that's not all due to the parting. Dear wife, say something to me that I can cherish through the weeks, perhaps months, we shall be separated."

"Say to yourself," said Narcissa slowly, "that, every moment, I am longing to be with you."

"Truly, are you, Narcissa?"

Narcissa looked steadily into his pleading eyes. "You are a wonderful companion, Marcus. I am never so happy as when I am with you. Oh, my dear! My dear! Don't look at me so! All that I have, all that I am, belong to you!"

"I know!" said Marcus huskily. He kissed her, lingeringly, and was gone.

In the days that followed, Narcissa and Eliza settled quickly to a routine that packed every waking hour with interest. Eliza devoted herself to teaching handicrafts to the women and girls about the fort, giving her spare time to learning all that she could of the primitive housekeeping she would undertake on the Clearwater, where it had been settled she and Henry would establish their mission.

Narcissa tutored Eloise McLoughlin, the extraordinarily pretty daughter of the Chief Factor and Madam McLoughlin. She gave innumerable singing lessons. She coached the two "morganatic wives" in the social amenities. When not engrossed by these not altogether agreeable chores, she studied the ways of the Hudson's Bay Company with the Indians. The more she studied, the more she realized how

true were the statements made by Captain Thing during that memorable visit at Fort Hall. Before she had been at Fort Vancouver two weeks, she had perceived that McLoughlin was a brilliant executive, and that much of the awe in which he was held in Oregon was deserved. She saw that his subordinates were picked men, carefully trained and thoroughly well disciplined and that they must, of necessity, be so, because the handling of Indians required a very special knowledge and ability. And she recognized that, in spite of all this special knowledge, these men, in their oasis, lived in constant danger of disaster. For Indian loyalty was a thing never fully to be won.

Thus, as the days flew by, Narcissa began to apprehend, in a general way, the problems that she and her fellows had, with what she told herself was fatuous assurance, undertaken to solve. Without adequate equipment and without knowledge, what real results could they hope to accomplish among the savages? Between the hostility of the British Company and the hostility of the red men, what could save the missionaries from being crushed?

She laughed to herself, ruefully enough, when she recalled the state of mind in which she and Marcus had left home. Actually, they had believed that the Indians desired them, would welcome them and their teachings! She thought of Jo Buffalo, and her laughter ended in a shudder.

Six weeks, to a day, after Governor Simpson's departure, a small sailing vessel dropped anchor off the fort, and the Governor was rowed ashore. Narcissa, at the time of his arrival, was sitting alone in the grape arbor, at the foot of the garden. When she heard the seven guns, she flushed, but did not move, and she was conscious both of excitement and of a sinking of the heart. And suddenly, very fiercely, she told herself that she did not want to see Governor Simpson again.

She remained in the arbor until nearly dusk, reading a

volume of Scott's "Life of Napoleon" which Dr. McLoughlin had urged upon her. The doctor was fanatically devoted to Napoleon and had admitted to Narcissa that he patterned his Indian policy after many of the ideas of the Little Corporal. Narcissa had heard several excited discussions about Napoleon's genius, in this remote outpost of British civilization. Bruce, one of the members of Bachelors' Hall, had fought at Waterloo, and nothing interested the Chief Factor more than to arrange a map on the table and with split bullets for soldiers, fight the battle again with Bruce. It had given Narcissa many curious thoughts, to sit beside the table, listening, watching the doctor moving his men, roaring orders, arguing with Bruce, and wondering as she sat, what was in the mind of that other doctor, building his mud hut in the remoteness of the mountain-locked plains.

Scott's "Life of Napoleon," which McLoughlin's son had sent from England as a gift to his father, was almost as delightful reading, Narcissa found, as one of the Waverly novels, which had so recently absorbed her old world of Angelica. Even after the guns had proclaimed the Governor's arrival, she was able to lose herself in the pages. Even the dusk did not cause her to close the book. This was brought about by a quiet voice:

"You are absorbed, indeed, Madam Whitman!"

Narcissa looked up into Governor Simpson's face.

She rose, and the book clasped to her bosom, bowed to him. "Did you wish to use the arbor, sir?" she asked.

"Yes, for a consultation," replied Simpson, with his delightful smile, "with you. There still is afterglow, and a silly moon is rising. We shall not be unlighted and I see you have your shawl for warmth."

"You have looked to every contingency, sir. Will you not be seated?" Narcissa, with a scarcely audible sigh, sank back to the bench.

"Thank you!" Simpson gravely pulled his cloak about

him and seated himself where he could watch the afterglow on Narcissa's face. "What is the story that made you oblivious to life?"

"Oblivious to my life, yes, but thrillingly conscious of a great one," replied Narcissa. "It's Sir Walter Scott's 'Life of Napoleon.' As, of course, you know, the doctor is quite rabid about the Corsican, as he calls him. I'd not be at all surprised, sometime, if the doctor should attempt a march on Sitka, with his thousand half-breeds, imagining himself as undertaking the march on Moscow."

"I hope the result would not be as disastrous as the historical event!" exclaimed Simpson.

"It probably would be," returned Narcissa cheerfully. "The doctor is too unequal of humor to be a military man."

The Governor chuckled. "You've not been idle, I perceive."

"One thing he has claimed to have absorbed from Napoleon, though, I think makes for stability here," Narcissa went on. " 'Be master!' he quotes constantly. And certainly, the natives tremble at his frown! At the same time, they show absolute confidence in his justice."

" 'Tis true," agreed Simpson, "he's a remarkable man in the right place."

"And he is master of white men as well as of savages." Narcissa watched the stern face opposite her. "The caste system here is as clean-cut and as iron-bound as though Fort Vancouver were in the British Empire."

"It is in the British Empire," returned the Governor coolly. "Every fort belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company has that honor."

"We have traveling with our mission party," Narcissa said, "a young man named William Gray. He is well educated and well bred, as we understand those qualities in America. He is in charge of our party, at least in so far as all that does not pertain to our religious offices is con-

cerned. Certainly he is in every aspect our social equal. Yet, the moment he entered this fort and was introduced to the Chief Factor as our agent, he was segregated. What a pity it was, as long as your standards are so artificial, that his avocation was mentioned! Merely as one of our party, he could have enjoyed all the extensive privileges extended by Dr. McLoughlin."

"The standards are artificial, of course," agreed the Governor, "but," with a contracting of his eyes, "they must obtain. Unless McLoughlin carefully maintains his social, as well as his business supremacy, here, his outpost will become a gathering place for a feckless rabble such as you Americans maintain at the 'Rendezvous.' I've visited that place. Be Gad, there's liberty and equality for you, madam! No! McLoughlin did the right thing with your friend. If he put himself in a place of business inferiority, he must be willing to take the social consequences. The Chief Factor dare not overstep the rule laid down or he'd breed resentment in his subordinates."

"It seems an intolerable sort of thing!" exclaimed Narcissa. "How can real men tolerate it?"

"They know conditions before they join up with the Company. Also, 'tis the accepted mode of existence among the British," replied Governor Simpson. "More than that, 'tis life in the large. Control, order, the subordinating of wills, discipline imposed on the less by the greater. It may take you Americans several centuries to learn that mob rule is self-destruction. But you'll learn it."

"Mob rule, as you call it," returned Narcissa quickly, "is self-developing. It produces men who can think for themselves, act for themselves. Granted that it produces chaos temporarily; out of the chaos will come, inevitably, men of ability, propelled by their own mental powers who will, at last, make a very effective government."

"No!" exclaimed Simpson. "You have not read the phi-

losophy of history, madam, with an impartial eye. As long as Americans can run freely over their enormous and rich land, drawing recklessly and uncontrolled, on its marvelous natural resources, they will thrive and wax great, particularly in their self-conceit! But wait, madam, until the resources are devoured, until your population has increased till it vies with that of England or of France and Germany. Then you shall see what will be wrought by your dog-eat-dog, the de'il take the hindmost, policy of government. Your democracy, Madam Whitman, has never been put to the test, nor will it be for another two hundred years. Then, my prophecy is, that you will demand and get your strong man, with the iron fist of vast authority, to crush your little man, that the big may live."

"More and more you persuade me, sir," said Narcissa, her blue eyes twinkling, "that it is essential that Oregon and California Alta belong to the United States."

Governor Simpson laughed. "Take them if you can, my dear Madam Whitman! But don't forget that the victory is to the strong, not to the virtuous, per se."

"You are thinking of my husband!" said Narcissa quickly. "Of his faith in the teachings of Christ as a philosophy to live by."

"As a philosophy to acquire empire by," corrected the Governor. "Don't delude yourself with phrases, madam. You and your husband are as avid to push your flag westward as I am mine. You are fonder of hypocritical phrases than I am, though."

Narcissa drew a long startled breath. "I wonder if you are right!" she murmured. "It will be a terrible thing for Marcus and me to face, if you are right."

"Indeed, you will discover after the armistice is over that I am right." Simpson nodded, his eyes half whimsical, half defiant.

"So this is an armistice," repeated Narcissa. "What happens next?"

"That depends on you," replied the Governor promptly, staring frankly at Narcissa.

Her beauty in the dying red of the perfect autumn day was a very moving thing to the Governor, for it was of the kind that belonged to race, to the fineness developed by generations of gracious living. It belonged to the world, the ideals, from which he had exiled himself. And for a moment, all the pomp and power of his governorship was dust and ashes in his mouth. He leaned forward, his gray eyes dark with pain.

"Madam Whitman," he said abruptly, "what does it mean? Why were you and I brought together in the wilderness? An impossible meeting of kindred spirits! Nay, don't deny it! In another environment, you would be the great lady and all your religious artifices would mellow to mere graciousness toward your fellows. And here we are met, both irretrievably bound to the circumstances in which we, of our own free will, have set our lives. Or was it free will? I do not know! All that I know is that, ever since I saw you that weary night at Fort Hall, I have been with you in spirit. I have seen you cheerful in the face of hunger and impediment. I have seen you gay when, under the menace of Jo Buffalo, most women would have been hysterical. But most of all, I have felt you as a force of beauty and strength that has entered my life for better or worse. I have known many women and they have not haunted me thus. Tell me," leaning still farther forward as though his eyes would pierce to her very soul, "for God's sake, tell me, meeting me frankly for this one moment in our lives, has any thought of me haunted you?"

Narcissa's pulse beat chokingly and all her heart seemed to her to go out in a pledge of loyalty to Marcus. And yet,

all that was truthful in her, and she was an exceptionally honest human being, rose to meet the Governor's plea. She returned his look and her hands, clasped lightly in her lap, began to tremble so that her very knees were shaken.

"'A force of beauty and strength that has entered my life,'" she repeated in her lovely tones. "So I have felt toward you, Governor Simpson, since our first meeting. I do not know what it means. I have ceased to try to interpret life. I spend my years fighting battles that are never won. Perhaps there is, in friendship, a height and depth of soul satisfaction, not to be found in any other relationship. Perhaps that is what our meeting means. Perhaps it has no significance other than a test of our characters. Surely you perceive as I do, that friendship is impossible between us. I cannot be loyal to my chosen lot and be a loyal friend to you. You see that, do you not, sir?"

"Yes, I see!" replied Simpson huskily. "I must be satisfied with your fine frankness. Most women would have simpered and withdrawn." He was silent for a long moment, staring at the ground, then he rubbed his hand over his forehead. "This, too!" he murmured. "This, too!" Then he rose and stood before her, a splendidly impressive figure of dignity and power. "You have been kind to me, madam," he said, and he lifted her hand to his lips, laid it gently back upon her knee and was gone.

Narcissa did not stir for a long time. The gloaming deepened. Some one in Bachelors' Hall tuned a violin. A baby cried faintly. Crickets chirped. Stars marched into vision. Finally Narcissa clasped her hands before her heart and raised her face to the sky.

"Dear God," she whispered, "you know that I am faithful to Marcus with the last fiber of my being. Teach me to love Marcus as he deserves to be loved. Amen."

Then she drew her shawl over her shoulders and returned to the house.

Dinner was served that night with even greater formality than before. The great hall blazed with candles and, in place of the round table before the fire, the banquet table was used, set forth with plate and linen Narcissa had not seen before.

The Governor and Dr. McLoughlin, James Douglas, Narcissa and Eliza comprised the company. Narcissa thanked the fates for her gray silk and Eliza mourned that she had nothing better than the ill-fitting merino. But she did not mourn long, for the dinner was a gay affair, and Dr. McLoughlin, who, like every one else, had taken a decided liking to the plain little woman, saw to it that she told the Governor, in her grave way, the story of Narcissa's struggle in the plains to teach Marcus to sing, and of the absurd mischance that had caused the tornado to hurl Henry into the bed of an English lord, who, hunting big game, had traveled with their convoy for a few days before they reached the "Rendezvous." She had told the stories many times and Dr. McLoughlin's great roar, so like Marcus', never failed to follow.

Eliza was just finishing the second tale when Ian, with an apologetic glance, stooped to whisper in the doctor's ear. McLoughlin turned at once to the Governor.

"They are having some difficulty with a group of Indian hunters at the fur store, Governor, and the savages, knowing you are here, go above me and demand audience with you."

Governor Simpson rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Why not call my annual council with the Indians, this evening, and allow them to bring the matter up then? That is, if you really wish me to handle it."

McLoughlin nodded and turned to Ian, who again whispered, and at some length, in the Chief Factor's ear.

"What!" roared the doctor, rising. "And why was this not brought to me before?" He turned to the Governor.

"There's fifty of them before the gates breathing murder and arson. If you will excuse me, Governor and ladies, I'll be about my business."

"I would like to see this council," exclaimed Narcissa.

"It would be well for you both to do so, considering the work you've set your hands to," said Simpson. "But you'd best see it from the little concealed gallery yonder," nodding toward a curtain, high in the room. "These councils are not without their dangers. We see to it that several guards are hidden where they may be most needed."

"We'll get Madam McLoughlin to take us there now," said Narcissa, rising.

The three women reached their vantage point just as Ian threw open the dining-room door and a long line of Indians filed into the room, followed by several white men. The tables had been pushed away and Governor Simpson stood before the fire. The braves, in feather headdresses and bright colored blankets, seated themselves on the floor, in a rough semicircle. The white men dropped into chairs, scattered about the room. Dr. McLoughlin took his place in a seat beside the Governor, who remained standing. Then there was silence, the Indians glaring sullenly at the serene face of the "Kitchie Okema."

"They are ver' angry," whispered Madam McLoughlin to the two white women. "They are read' to draw tomahawks and fight. He will have great trouble to mak' them hear him speak, that Kitchie Okema. I do not lak' the look of this at all."

"They seem peaceful," whispered Eliza.

"Peaceful! You do not know what you speak. They are bad, those Injun. Cayuse, they are. Rich and bad. We have much troub' with them."

"Why, those are the ones we are to have our mission among!" exclaimed Narcissa.

The half-breed woman gave Narcissa a quick look, then

turned to her watch of the room below. The silence now had lasted for perhaps ten minutes and the Governor turned to the Chief Factor.

"Have in Malcolm Campbell!" he said quietly.

Shortly, the rear door opened and in stepped a tall, handsome man in kilts and bonnet, a bagpipe at his lips. As he crossed the threshold he began to play Bonnie Doon and he played it with a mastery that thrilled Narcissa. Strange as his instrument seemed to her, she recognized in him the skilled musician, and the wild sweet notes moved her almost unbearably.

For nearly an hour Campbell marched up and down the room, playing no warlike melodies, but lovely airs of indescribable melancholy. During all this time, Governor Simpson stood immovably, watching the faces of the braves below him. And the braves themselves! One after another, blankets were loosened, war bonnets were laid aside, concealed weapons were placed on the floor, rigid bodies relaxed and swayed gently with the rhythm of the pibroch; and at last, with tears coursing down his cheeks, a tall chief rose to speak. Governor Simpson nodded at Malcolm Campbell and the music ceased. The chief extended a dramatic brown arm and spoke solemnly and at length. When he had finished, a half-breed in deerskin clothing rose, bowed deeply and interpreted:

"We came to make war on the English. The spirit pipes have forbidden that. Still our hearts are angry. Why have the English sent Bostons to settle among us? They said when we asked them why they came that Dr. McLoughlin had sent them. Umtippe, our chief, then gave them land. But I, I am the war chief. I and my strongest braves are angry. When Bostons come they bring rum. They will take the senses of our young men with it. When the Bostons come they will not keep their word in trade. There is no strong man among them, such as the Kitchie Okema or Dr.

McLoughlin. Why did the Kitchie Okema allow Dr. McLoughlin to send them?"

"The Indians sent four braves to the Bostons, in St. Louis, asking that white teachers be sent to tell them of the White Man's God," replied Governor Simpson. "The teachers have come. Kitchie Okema could not defy the desires of the Indians and refuse to allow the teachers in Oregon. Why did you send for these Bostons, if you did not want them?"

"It was the Nez Percés who sent for them," replied the chief. "Let them settle among the Nez Percés."

"Two of the four who went to St. Louis returned," said the Governor. "They were Nez Percés. The two who died in St. Louis were Cayuse."

"That is a lie!" exclaimed the war chief.

Governor Simpson seemed to grow six inches taller as he shot a forefinger at the Indian. "How dare you tell me I lie?" he roared. "A Kitchie Okema never lies. Men have died for less than that insult. Tell me immediately that I speak truth or I'll turn you out with my own hands."

The Cayuse stared, in wonder, while the Governor uttered these angry words, and as the interpreter translated, he showed every sign of consternation.

"The Kitchie Okema speaks truth," he mumbled hurriedly.

"These Bostons have come at the request of members of your own tribe," Simpson went on, his voice as cutting as steel. "If you are not strong enough to control your people, that is your lookout. What they do among you, that is your and their concern. But mark you, my Cayuse war chief, that if either of the women, with them, receives harm at your hands, we will drag the cannon from Fort Walla Walla to your village and kill as many Cayuse as there are hairs on those women's heads! White men protect all white women. A Briton will fight to revenge even a Boston woman. Do you understand?"

"I understand," muttered the Cayuse.

"And the next time you have complaints to make, don't come howling at our gates like a pack of wolves, or you'll be treated as wolves. Come as men, brave men, as ye are, and you'll be treated like men."

There was utter silence, then Governor Simpson said, his voice suddenly as courteous as though he were addressing an honored guest, "Have you supped?"

"No! We made great speed and have fasted for two days," replied the Indian sullenly.

"Too bad! Too bad!" exclaimed the Governor. "McLoughlin, will you not order a feast for the Cayuse war chief and his braves? Something, immediately, perhaps, to stay their stomachs, then roast a steer for them! Make a night of it, with plenty of sweet cakes and potatoes."

As the interpreter repeated this, a broad smile wiped every sullen line from the chief's face, and there was a long "A-a-a-h!" from his braves; the first sound that had broken from them during the council.

With a magnificent gesture, flinging his blanket over his shoulder, the chief strode from the room, followed in single file by his smiling warriors. There remained only a handful of Indians in trappers' clothing. James Douglas stepped forward to state the case.

"These Indians, sir, have brought in a pack of pelts. Half of them are unmarked, the other half have the marks of American trappers on them. We have paid for the unmarked pelts but are holding the others subject to orders."

"This is Dr. McLoughlin's affair," objected the Governor.

"It is, sir," agreed Douglas, "but they insist on referring it to you."

"Insist!" roared Simpson. "Insist? And who are these scurvy thieves to insist with the Chief Factor and me? McLoughlin, you give orders, man."

Dr. McLoughlin leaned forward in his chair. "Let them

bring a written order from the white trappers and we will pay."

A short, heavy Indian stepped forward. "We no can bring um order. Injun that bring pelts say to me, 'White trapper die. You sell pelts for me. We give you half.'"

"That means a Boston trapper has been murdered," said McLoughlin, sternly. "Collect your pay from the murderer!"

With a howl the three trappers plunged from the room.

Dr. McLoughlin turned to the Governor. "I'll hold the pelts here till 'tis sure there's no owner. I dare not pay these men for them, even though they kill the murderer, as they undoubtedly will. And now, sir, there is a whole set of judicial cases the Indians wish your ruling on. We can best hold these hearings in the main office where the papers are filed."

The Governor nodded and followed the Chief Factor from the room. Ian came in, drank off the dregs of wine, left in the Governor's and McLoughlin's glasses, and snuffed out the candles.

Eliza Spalding slipped her hand into Narcissa's. "They are terrible people, these British!" she whispered.

Madam McLoughlin led the way into the dimly lighted hall. "Will you mak' me visit?" she asked.

"No, thank you, madam!" replied Narcissa. "If you will excuse us we will both go to bed."

They said good night and went to the room they had shared since their husbands left. Here, in the candlelight, they stared at one another.

"Do you suppose the Nez Percés will repudiate us, as the Cayuse have you?" asked Eliza.

"They say the Nez Percés always have been friendly to the Whites and the Cayuse, unfriendly," replied Narcissa. "I suppose that's why Marcus and I were put among them. I scarcely believe you will be troubled."

"But why should you be given the danger point?" insisted Eliza.

Narcissa sat down on the edge of the bed, with a sigh. She felt that she knew why the division had been made, but she could not tell Eliza the reason without offending her. She made no attempt to answer, but gave another trend to the conversation.

"I am terribly troubled, Eliza," she said. "Marcus and Henry should know about what we heard this evening, at once. There is no telling what that Cayuse will do."

"The Governor is so friendly to you, why don't you ask him, in the morning, to send word to our husbands?"

"His friendliness to me is entirely personal, Eliza. He intends to oust us all from Oregon by fair means or foul. He'd refuse me."

Eliza slowly began to undress, but Narcissa sat motionless, staring at the candle. And suddenly she felt a violent desire to leave Fort Vancouver, with all its comforts and its growing personal complications. And with that desire came an equally sudden conviction that the Governor would do all he could to prevent them from going to the new mission station. There would be excuses and delays, and perhaps more drastic measures.

As if she sensed a part of Narcissa's thought, Eliza said suddenly, "I wish we were with our own men!"

"So do I!" exclaimed Narcissa heartily. "But I'm afraid it will be long before we see them!"

"Let's send word to them to come for us," suggested Eliza.

"I have no confidence in their getting it," said Narcissa. "I am very much troubled, Eliza!"—rising and beginning to sweep up and down the room, the gray silk flowing in lovely lines about her. "Eliza, I have such a curious feeling—that we may be kept from our husbands—until I don't know what!"

Eliza, brushing her hair, turned a startled face toward her friend. "How can that be? You mean they'd use force?"

"I don't know what I mean. I only know that I'm afraid."

Eliza looked at Narcissa with growing apprehension in her eyes. "Then let's get out without waiting to be sent for. Let's go to-night."

"To-night? How can that be done?" asked Narcissa.

"There was a boatload of freight started late this afternoon for Fort Walla Walla," replied Eliza. "I heard the head voyageur tell Mr. Douglas that they'd make a start and camp for the night at Lone Rock, five miles up the river. Let's go down to the camp and take passage. The Indians' feast will be beginning now and folks will be going out of the fort to look on. So we can get by the guard at the gate."

"How I'd love to!" cried Narcissa. "But, Eliza, after all their kindness to us, we can't sneak off like that."

"Kindness! Aren't we earning our board and something beside? If they are our enemies, they're our enemies, and I don't intend to bow and scrape to them. That's final."

"I wish I were with Marcus, this minute!" Narcissa burst forth suddenly. "Who is it?" she added, as a knock sounded on the door.

"Me! Madam McLoughlin."

Narcissa unlatched the door and the little half-breed woman came in. "I am alone, too, lak' you," she said. "Gov' Simpson, the doctor and Mr. Douglas, they go away ver' quickly."

"What has happened!" exclaimed Narcissa.

"Big Spanish brigade march up the Willamette and Hudson's Bay men must go mak' it stop before it reach Columbia. No Spanish north of Columbia, that the rule." Madam McLoughlin waited for a moment, then went on a

little breathlessly. "You two been ver' good to me. You lak' me?"

"Yes," replied the two white women sincerely.

"You tol' doctor I must eat at table with him. You teach me lak' I been all white. Now! You heard Cayuse to-night? I been talk with Cayuse chief, just now. He eat here too, three days, then he will go back, kill three mission men. If you ladies were there, he not dare do it because of what Kitchie Okema said to-night. So he do, before you get there, and he thinks that the Hudson's Bay Company not care."

She paused, staring at the two women in a troubled way.

"Thank you, Madam McLoughlin," said Narcissa. "You have helped me to make a decision."

"What shall you do?" asked Madam McLoughlin anxiously.

"Wouldn't you rather not know so you can't be blamed?" asked Eliza.

"That would be best, if you do not need my help," replied the half-breed woman.

"Are you, by chance, going out to see the Indian feasting?" asked Narcissa. "If you are we will go out of the gates with you in about half an hour."

Madam McLoughlin nodded and went softly out of the room.

"I'll write a note to Dr. McLoughlin, Eliza," said Narcissa, in a low voice, "if you'll do us each up a little package of clothing. The rest, if they will, they can send us by freight."

Eliza nodded, and for the next half hour the room hummed with industry. At the end of that period they passed through the great gates with Madam McLoughlin.

CHAPTER VII

THE PLACE OF THE RYE GRASS

IN the first, faint gray of dawn, the head voyageur of the freight express stood shivering over the fire, drinking a scalding cup of tea and shouting directions at his men, who were at work loading a boat, a few feet from the blaze. At a startled gesture from one of the men, he looked up to see Narcissa and Eliza stepping into the fire glow.

"Good-morning, François!" said Narcissa. "Have you room for two more? We wish to reach Fort Walla Walla as soon as possible."

"But certainly, madam!" exclaimed the Canadian, as coolly as though this were not the first time white women had ever traveled in his boat. "Will you have breakfast?"

"That would be most grateful, wouldn't it, Eliza!" Narcissa put her arm around her friend's drooping shoulders.

"I'm famished for a cup of that good tea," said Eliza. "Mrs. Whitman is a powerful walker for a poor stick like me to follow," smiling at François.

"You walked! All the way from the fort? I hope there is no trouble!"

"Not any!" declared Eliza. "I'll tell you! We just got so homesick for our husbands, we decided to run away to them! The Governor and the doctor and the Chief Trader went off on some business last night that will keep them two or three days and we couldn't wait for them to get back. So here we are, on your hands!"

"My pleasure!" François bowed, at the same time his black eyes scrutinized the two with an unbelieving air. However, the temptation to play host to these women, whose

arrival was the talk of the whole territory, was greater than his desire to play spy. He knew that Pierre Pambrun was deep in the confidence of the powers at Fort Vancouver. He would deliver the women into Pambrun's capable hands and wash his own of responsibility. He fed his guests bountifully, arranged a comfortable place for them in the great bateau, and before the sun had risen, Narcissa and Eliza were swung out into the great river to the familiar classic of the Columbia:

"Rouli, roulant, ma boule, roulant,
En roulant, ma boule, roulant,
En roulant, ma boule."

The two women made the beautiful voyage in great comfort, watching always behind them, it is true, for the sweep of Indian canoes, but upheld always by the firm conviction that God was leading them in this new adventure. And when, late in the afternoon—after a week *en route*—they swung rhythmically toward the grim walls of Fort Walla Walla, the conviction became a certainty. For standing with Pierre Pambrun beside the mooring post was Henry Spalding!

They landed amidst startled exclamations, protests and effusive greetings.

"I was going back for you with this boat," cried Henry, when Pambrun had ordered him to take the women to the fort while he attended to the freight. "What happened? Why have you no luggage?"

Together, Narcissa and Eliza managed to give him a clear idea of the incidents that led to their flight. As the full significance of what they told him sank in on Henry, he grew pale to his very lips.

"But that can't be! Why, after all, the Hudson's Bay Company has been very kind. They've allowed us sup-

plies. Pambrun has taken a great deal of trouble for us. It can't be!"

"But it is! Don't be a fool, Henry!" urged his wife. "Now, mind you, not a word of this to any one but Dr. Whitman and William Gray. As far as any one else knows, we're a couple of silly, gushing brides, homesick for their husbands."

"Where is the doctor?" asked Narcissa.

"He comes in, to-night, to get the freight that came on this boat. I came, yesterday. The boat is a day late."

"Rain held us a day at The Dalles," said Narcissa. "In what condition is the house building?"

"Your house, at Waii-lat-pu, is finished," replied Henry, "and Gray has gone up to the Clearwater, to a Nez Percés village called Lap-Wai, to begin work on ours. Do you think I ought to go on up to Fort Vancouver? Will those Cayuse massacre me if they meet me?"

"Certainly not, Henry," answered Eliza. "You'll be in a Hudson's Bay boat. You go along and apologize for your silly, sentimental wife."

"Those men won't believe that stuff!" cried Henry.

"Of course not!" agreed Narcissa. "But what can they do about it? Ah, there is Madam Pambrun come to greet us!"

Once more the fatuous explanation of their flight, then a hearty supper, and before this was finished a loud, familiar "Halloo!" without the stockade. A moment later Marcus, disheveled, unshaven, stood astounded in the doorway.

Narcissa ran to greet him. "O Marcus! Marcus! We *had* to come! We couldn't stay away from you and Henry any longer!"

Marcus, oblivious to the laughing gaze of the group around the table, clasped Narcissa in his arms. "Dear, dear Narcissa! You're like a gift from heaven!"

"But what a fascinating devil you are with the ladies, doctor!" cried Pambrun.

Marcus shouted with laughter and felt of his rough cheeks. "I brought my razor with me, for Madam Pambrun's benefit! But," holding Narcissa from him and looking keenly into her eyes, "you are sure all is well, Narcissa?"

"Now that I am with you, all is well!" exclaimed Narcissa, who could have wept for relief from a greater strain than she had dared to acknowledge, even to herself.

It was not until they were alone, in the bastion bedroom, that Narcissa attempted any explanation for the doctor's benefit. He listened to her, with horror and incredulity growing in his eyes.

"But, Narcissa, the Cayuse have been most friendly! They appeared delighted to have us settle at Waii-lat-pu. Old Chief Umtippe made us a present of a tract of land—several hundred acres! He made a long presentation speech. An Indian named Charley Compo interpreted it for me, and it was quite a flowery welcome, I assure you."

"And you heard no protests?" asked Narcissa.

"Of course, I have no Cayuse and they have no English," replied Marcus, "so what I heard made no impression. But this war chief fellow hasn't been near me, as far as I know. Narcissa," changing his tone abruptly, "this is no country for a white woman!"

"But it is!" Narcissa smiled. "No harm will come to us and none to you, as long as you are with us."

"Your faith in the power of the Hudson's Bay Company is greater than mine," said Marcus.

"Yes," Narcissa spoke thoughtfully, "I have great respect for their power. But, Marcus, I have greater respect for the Hand that is leading us on. As surely as I am lying here beneath the shadow of this cannon, I believe that God has predestined you and me for this work, and that He

will, if we struggle hard enough, help us to real achievement. I realize, as well as you do, that our dangers are many and terrible. But we dare not turn back! My responsibility is as great as yours. We will go out to Waii-lat-pu, begin our work and leave the rest to the Almighty."

"My fears are only for you, Narcissa," sighed Marcus.

"Let them go! Let's put our minds on converting savages."

"I only wish it was as simple as that!" groaned the doctor.

"So do I!" agreed Narcissa, with a rueful laugh.

The following morning, Marcus had a long conclave with Henry, in the corral. It is to the clergyman's everlasting credit that, frightened as he was, he offered to exchange mission stations with the Whitmans. To this, of course, Marcus would not listen, and Henry started for Vancouver, in a chaotic state of mind, relief and fear dominating in turn.

The boat was not out of sight, when Marcus announced that he was ready to leave for Waii-lat-pu. Pambrun had offered to loan Narcissa a horse, and she did not keep the doctor waiting. Eliza Spalding, who was to wait at the fort for Henry's return, followed them to the gate, where the horses were tied. Marcus did not linger over his farewell, but the two women, so unlike, so curiously brought together, clung to each other in helpless tears, until Marcus, his own eyes suffused, put out a huge, gentle hand and separated them. Shortly, he and Narcissa were jogging, with a little string of pack horses, along the east trail which led for twenty-five miles beside the Walla Walla to their new home.

It was clear and cold. The river, a brown rift in still browner plains, made the only break in the wide, gently undulating valley that was hemmed in by mountain ranges. They rode with their faces toward the Blue Mountains,

where, Marcus explained, was to be found the only timber suitable for making lumber.

"It's twenty miles east of Waii-lat-pu," he said. "We used as few logs as we could, and those we dragged down, one at a time, tied to a horse. We've built the cabin of adobe brick."

"Have the Indians helped?" asked Narcissa.

"They'd have dragged logs down for us, but that is so expensive, a little of it went a long way. They consider any work they do for any one but the Hudson's Bay people makes squaws of them."

"Is the place on good farm land?" asked Narcissa.

"I'm sure it is," replied the doctor. "Pambrun helped us choose it. It's a three hundred acre peninsula, formed by the Walla Walla and a creek. It's covered with wild rye as high as your head. That's what Waii-lat-pu means—the Place of Rye Grass. The Indian village is just across the Walla Walla. There must be about two hundred Cayuse there now. Charley Compo says they'll move south soon, for the winter."

"And you've had no trouble with them?"

"None at all. They're as curious as monkeys. They've watched the making and laying of every brick, but they've not interfered."

"We must lay careful plans about our attitude toward them," said Narcissa. "I think the Hudson's Bay Company is quite right in its method, a combination of tyranny and kindness."

Marcus looked at Narcissa with an expression of astonishment. "I suppose that's the result of nearly two months of living among the so-called aristocracy! What would the American Board think to hear you speak so, Narcissa? We were sent here to live and teach by Christ's example of meekness and gentleness. I plan to treat them with entire kindness."

Narcissa's heart sank. "Marcus! Marcus! You will ruin us! They are irresponsible children, with no moral sense whatever! On one side, they are tractable and peace loving. On the other side, they are fiends. Dr. McLoughlin says so. Kindness, yes. But we must require a return from them for every favor we do them, else they will think themselves kings and we, their vassals, owing them homage. Their demands will become outrageous. Oh, I employed my leisure time at Fort Vancouver to some purpose, even if I didn't learn to make butter in a hide as Eliza Spalding did!"

Marcus brought his fist down on his saddle pommel. "We must agree on our policy, Narcissa, and I must insist that, as head of the mission, the policy be mine!"

It was Narcissa's turn to give a long stare. "Must! That's a strange word for you to use to me, Marcus."

The doctor flushed, but said between his set teeth, "I've been doing a lot of thinking since I left you. You have every advantage over me and if I'm not careful you'll dominate me entirely."

"I have no desire to dominate you, Marcus!" exclaimed Narcissa. "And in what way have I an advantage?"

The doctor's eyes moistened with emotion, but his jaw still was set. "I am hopelessly in love with you. You have only affection for me. . . . I will not become your dog, Narcissa, to fawn and tremble and beg for favor. I will not!"

"Marcus!" cried Narcissa, aghast. "What have I done to make you speak so? I must have been selfish and aggressive, but I did not realize it. You must believe that!"

"You have been neither, Narcissa!" Suddenly placing a brown hand on hers, "I am fighting for—for my soul's freedom!" His voice broke miserably.

The familiar sense of loneliness swept over Narcissa and that equally familiar sense of loyalty to the man beside her.

"You shall have your way, dear Marcus," she said, her lips quivering. "In every sense you are to be the head of our mission and, as best I can, I will follow your counsel."

"Thank you, Narcissa! And, although in your heart, I know you think my policy is foolish—after all, I have the greatest authority for it!"

"I know!" agreed Narcissa, humbly, and said no more. But the sense of tragedy that had lifted, with the happy meeting at Fort Walla Walla, settled down upon her once more.

They rode in silence, until Marcus exclaimed, with a smile, "There go some of our future parishioners!"

Coming into the trail, from the left, was a little train of Indian ponies, each ridden by a squaw, in a red blanket, and each dragging, on two parallel poles, a choice assortment of pelts, pots and babies. At least twenty dogs, yelping and fighting, followed the half dozen horses. The Whitmans overtook and passed them easily, for the little caravan, on beholding Narcissa, stopped in its tracks to stare. Narcissa laughed and waved her hand, but there was no response.

Just before dusk, they topped a little hill and the doctor pulled up his horse, exclaiming with a voice of great pride, "There it is!"

Below them flowed the Walla Walla, fringed with cottonwoods and willows, as was the creek that joined it to form the peninsula. Not far from the Walla Walla and near the base of the peninsula stood a little adobe cabin. With a cry of pleasure, Narcissa spurred her horse and had dismounted at the doorstep when Marcus overtook her. He lifted aside the blanket that served as door and Narcissa entered her home.

A square room, with two windows. On one side, a fireplace with kindlings laid. Before the hearth, cottonwood logs in lieu of chairs. In one corner, a huge pile of buffalo

skins and blankets,—their bed. Pegs driven into the adobe walls held the meager supply of cooking utensils and the split log mantel displayed a few pieces of crockery, some books and Narcissa's sewing bag.

Marcus kindled the fire and Narcissa sank on one of the logs and held her long, fine hands to the blaze. Then she looked up at Marcus, whose tanned face was eager and questioning.

"You've done wonders, Marcus! You would have been satisfied with a tent for yourself, so that all this toil was for me. I'm a thousand times grateful."

"Do you think you can keep from being too homesick, here, my dear wife?" Marcus was kneeling beside her now, with his arm about her waist.

Narcissa put her arm across his shoulders. "You are too good to me, Marcus!" she said. "You make me feel—"

She was interrupted by the entrance of an Indian, a tall, old man, wearing the bright red coat of a British soldier and leather pantaloons. Over his head was draped a red and yellow handkerchief on which was placed an otter cap, while, superimposed on the cap was a huge white horse's tail, which drooped over his shoulders. He was a bigger man than Marcus, with a long face, thin to emaciation, and covered with a thick cross-hatching of wrinkles. His eyes, in the firelight, were deep-set and melancholy. He stood silently in the doorway, staring at Narcissa.

The doctor rose and said, with a formal manner, "Narcissa, this is Chief Umtippe, who gave us the land for the mission. He can't understand English, but I think you'd better shake hands with him, anyhow."

Narcissa swept across the room and took the chief's hand cordially. He permitted her to shake it, then the two stood gazing at each other. It seemed to Narcissa that there was more than curiosity in the Indian's scrutiny. It was as if he were appraising her, measuring her against Marcus and

himself. She knew that, to an Indian, a woman was less than nothing. Still, as she returned his look, she felt herself bracing her will against his.

His scrutiny did not last long. His eyes shifted to her hair. He rubbed his great brown hand over her braids and touched her cheeks, which glowed with color. Then, with a grunt, he walked slowly about the room, examined the contents of Narcissa's sewing bag, turned the books over and, with another grunt, strode out of the house.

Narcissa looked at Marcus, with a comical raising of her brows. "How soon can we hang a door there instead of a blanket?"

"Not until I can saw a log into boards, with a handsaw. It's a slow job. But we will make them understand that we want privacy." Marcus threw some sagebrush knots on the fire and lifted a pot to the crane. "I made a venison stew before I left, yesterday."

"I'll set the table," said Narcissa, looking at the crude arrangement of split logs in the middle of the room. "Marcus, you are already a highly accomplished pioneer. I have a long way to go to equal you. But I'll arrive! You'll see!"

"This kind of thing doesn't take skill!" The doctor waved his hand to compass the room. "But to learn the Cayuse tongue does. That is your special task. You discovered on the trail this summer how blind my ears are! You'll have to learn the language and then teach it to me. I've engaged Charley Compo, who's been a Hudson's Bay Company Indian, to teach you. We pay him in tobacco; an inch of rope tobacco for each four hours of teaching. While you're doing that I'll be clearing land for growing crops."

"I like my first task exceedingly much, sir!" exclaimed Narcissa. "When do we begin church work?"

"Well, it will be idle to try to do anything for the Indians

till we get at least a smattering of their tongue," replied Marcus. "We'll have our own service to-morrow, as it's Sunday."

"Very well, 'Governor'!" Narcissa's eyes twinkled. "But does it not occur to your Excellency that there's the least tendency on your part to delegate to me the rôle of Christian obedience and humility, while you assume the masterful manner you so abhor in the Hudson's Bay Company folk?"

Marcus scratched his head and laughed ruefully. "I know I'll fumble a lot, Narcissa. But be patient with me."

"I'll agree to be endlessly patient," chuckled Narcissa, "if you'll agree to let me keep my sense of humor."

"'Let you!'" grunted Marcus. "That's good too!" Then with a sudden assumption of Ian's most dignified manner, he placed the smutty stewpot on the table. "Madam, supper is served!"

Immediately after breakfast, the next morning, the doctor opened the Bible and a small book of sermons, and with his very beautiful and attentive congregation of one, began the first church service at the new mission. When he had finished reading a short sermon, Narcissa sang "Rock of Ages." She sat before the fire, her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes on the leaping flames and her glorious voice seemed to shake the little cabin.

Scarcely had the last note of the song left her lips, when the door curtain was lifted and Umtippe strode in, followed by half a dozen blanketed warriors. They seated themselves on the floor and Marcus, turning to the youngest of the group, an Indian with a very intelligent face, pointed to his Bible.

"Compo, tell them that I'll read them about the white man's God."

Compo spoke tersely to old Umtippe. The chief shook

his head until the white horse's tail swept the interpreter's face, and replied, pointing to Narcissa.

"Chief says white squaw must sing," reported Compo. "He doesn't care about your God."

"Sing, then, Narcissa," said Marcus.

There was a remote twinkle in Narcissa's blue eyes, but without comment she began "From Greenland's Icy Mountains."

To a man, the Indians leaned forward and, with bated breath, followed her every note. When she had finished, Umtippe gave a great sigh, then touched her skirt and pointed to his throat.

"He wants more," said Charley Compo.

And again Narcissa sang. Her voice, a lyric soprano, had a haunting cadence of sadness, that poignant, heart-twisting quality, which had so moved Miles Goodyear. As the beautiful notes of "Consolation" swept through the cabin, old Umtippe groaned and beat his breast, and tears began to run down the cheeks of Charley Compo. By the time she had finished Mendelssohn's incomparable melody, all the Indians were weeping, yet Umtippe would not permit her to stop. He kept her singing, until at the end of an hour Narcissa made him understand that her throat was weary. Then, without a word, he led his sobbing warriors out.

Marcus seized both of Narcissa's hands. "Oh, my darling wife!" he cried. "All these weeks I've been reproaching myself for bringing you among these savages, and already you have them in the hollow of your hand!"

"Indeed, I haven't!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Bad people are quite as much moved by music as good, and the emotions it rouses haven't the slightest effect on morals. All that I see in this morning's experience is, that we have a very emotional people to deal with! That's why Governor

Simpson called in Malcolm Campbell, as I told you. But it was victory only for a moment, as the Governor very well knew."

"Nevertheless," said Marcus, somewhat crestfallen, "your singing is going to be very useful to us."

"Yes, for amusing and perhaps in crises, I think it will be," agreed Narcissa.

And thus ended the first mission service.

On Monday morning, they began the program outlined by Marcus. Narcissa found Charley Compo a willing and vastly interested teacher. She perceived that it was going to be easy to find Cayuse words for the ordinary objects and events of life. But the Indians had no words expressing moral and spiritual ideas. How, unless the Cayuse learned English, the missionaries were to convey any conception of the Christian faith to them was a problem worthy of Narcissa's mental caliber, and she attacked it with avidity.

While Narcissa worked in the cabin, Marcus began his attack on the sagebrush that crowded to the very door. A jocose and interested Cayuse audience soon gathered about him, but not one of them could he beg or bribe into helping him. This was distinctly and traditionally squaw's work, and no buck would lower himself by touching a grubbing hoe.

Marcus did not waste much time trying to entice them to work. He was overwhelmed by the knowledge of the amount his single hands must accomplish if the mission was to be made independent of the Hudson's Bay Company. He longed to be in a position where he would not have to ask them to sell him any supplies whatever. So his grubbing hoe rooted and tore furiously, and by noon great heaps of brush were burning all around the cabin. Narcissa lent a hand after dinner, piling and burning roots and faggots, while the doctor grubbed. Toward mid-

afternoon, a drizzling rain began to fall, and Narcissa was about to return to the house, when a great hubbub in the Indian village, across the river, brought her to pause. Before she and Marcus could do more than look questioningly at each other, a string of horses, each bearing a naked rider, galloped across the stream and up to the cabin, where they brought up before the two whites.

The leader, the upper part of whose body was painted a brilliant red, addressed Narcissa violently.

"It's the Cayuse war chief, back from Fort Vancouver!" she exclaimed.

"You go in the house, at once, Narcissa!" ordered Marcus.

"That's probably what he's saying too!" replied Narcissa. "I shall do nothing of the sort! I heard the orders the Governor gave him and I don't believe he'll dare harm you, as long as I'm clinging to you, thus."

She put both hands around the doctor's great arm and looked up at the war chief defiantly, her heart, meantime, shaking her whole body. She was afraid; almost as afraid, as on the day Jo Buffalo had attacked her. The war chief continued to address her angrily, brandishing a tomahawk, and making hideous contortions of his face, while the two missionaries stared at him, as if half hypnotized. She was afraid, and yet Narcissa was entirely conscious of the serene and enchanting beauty of snow-covered Mount Hood, which rose in solitary grandeur as a background for the vermilion figure of the madman on the horse.

The war chief actually had begun to foam at the mouth, when Umtippe galloped up, bringing his horse to its haunches before his brother. He uttered an angry command. A moment later Charley Compo came running breathlessly to join the scene.

"What's the trouble, Charley?" cried Marcus.

"To-wen-too, the war chief, wishes to drive doct' away.

But he says Kitchie Okema won't let him touch the white squaw. He is very mad because the white squaw got here before he did."

"Hooray for me!" gasped Narcissa.

Here Umtippe said something to Marcus, and Compo interpreted. "He says he will give the white squaw to the medicine man so that she can sing always for the Cayuse. He says he will buy her from you for twenty white horses; that then you must go away, because the war chief is making too much trouble for him."

"Compo, you have lived with white men and you know just how impossible it is for a white man to sell his wife. Explain that to Umtippe and then say, *No!*"

Compo looked puzzled. "White men have very many different Indian wives. What do you mean?"

"Never mind!" shouted Marcus. "Say No! No! No!"

A lengthy colloquy ensued between Umtippe and Compo, constantly interrupted by To-wen-too. Finally the interpreter turned to Marcus.

"Umtippe says, how much will you pay his brother, To-wen-too, to leave you alone."

"Not a cent! Not a twist of tobacco!" shouted the doctor.

"Wait a moment, Marcus," said Narcissa. "Is this your idea of the soft answer? Why not ask them for time in which to think this over?"

"That's good!" exclaimed Compo, with a not unfriendly eye on his tall pupil, and without waiting for word from the doctor he spoke to the chiefs.

"Umtippe says, when the wolves begin to howl, to-night, they will come back for your answer." And Charley Compo followed the cavalcade, which immediately started back to the Indian village.

"Whew!" breathed Marcus. "Narcissa, I can feel your whole body trembling. Come into the cabin and let me

help you into dry things." He did not allow her to talk of the crisis that had arisen until they both were established before the fire with a pot of tea brewing.

Then he said, "It's our first clash with them. We must try to meet it kindly and firmly."

Narcissa nodded, watching him closely.

"They have given us the land and welcomed us here," he went on. "Now they ask me to pay for the privilege of staying. How do you suppose Christ would have handled this situation?"

"I think He would have given what was necessary for the sake of saving souls," replied Narcissa.

"Yes, I think He would have," agreed Marcus. "Is that what you would do, Narcissa?"

"Yes, but I'd accompany the payment with a threat."

"What sort of a threat?" asked the doctor.

What sort, indeed? Narcissa looked at Marcus, then round the cabin. "We are very helpless, Marcus! We have nothing to threaten with."

"Exactly!" said Marcus. "It goes against my gorge to pay that savage anything, yet I have no other recourse. Do you think I have?"

Narcissa shook her head. "How much shall you offer?"

"I'll begin with a foot of rope tobacco. Three feet is all we have, and we have left less than ten dollars in money. I think"—abruptly—"that the American Board will be seriously displeased with our use of this method."

"The American Board, in its reprimand, had better suggest a better!" retorted Narcissa.

Marcus sighed and Narcissa set about getting supper. But the darkness came early, on this rainy afternoon, and the wolves howled long before the meal was ready. A few moments after the first, far, melancholy cry had sounded over the plains, the curtain was jerked aside and the two chiefs and the interpreter entered. Marcus met them with

great dignity and gave them seats, before the fire. Then he solemnly held up a coil of tobacco, about six inches long.

"Tell To-wen-too that I will give this piece if he will promise to let us alone," he said to Compo.

Compo delivered the message and received the reply: "To-wen-too says he must have two feet of tobacco and the bag," pointing to Narcissa's sewing bag. "also ten pounds of pemmican and ten of sugar."

Marcus had not spent six months in Indian country without learning something of the Indian idea of trading. He added one inch to the odoriferous brown rope, and silently held it up. The three Cayuse settled themselves complacently. This was language they understood and thoroughly enjoyed. All signs of belligerence faded from To-wen-too's saturnine face. He looked, thought Narcissa, positively benevolent!

For a long hour the dickering went on, Narcissa taking no part in it, but watching Marcus with eager interest: measuring him against Simpson, against McLoughlin, against Douglas. He was lacking in social grace. His religion, to which he was passionately faithful, was, in its tenets of humbleness and gentleness, a violent contrast to the aggressiveness and the hasty temper which were natural to him. It made him uncertain and often changeable, in both opinion and act. Yet Narcissa knew that, actually, he was steadfast and tenacious; a man to whom one's heart went out in utter trust, as it never could either to Simpson or McLoughlin. And he was extraordinarily likable. Even these savages, barred from an understanding of him by far more than mere language, as the bargaining went on, Narcissa could see, were responding to his simple friendliness, to the boyish grin with which he met each shake of their heads, each grunt of protest.

At the end of the hour, there lay on the floor between Marcus and the Cayuse about fifteen inches of rope tobacco,

two fish hooks and a pound of pemmican. The doctor rose, shrugged his shoulders and said to Charley Compo:

"That's final, Compo! If I give them more I won't be able to keep Mrs. Whitman in food this winter."

There was no mistaking the finality in the doctor's voice and manner. After a long confab in Cayuse, the chiefs rose, To-wen-too gathered the loot in the tail of his blanket, Umtippe carefully arranged the strings which held his red coat together, Charley Compo helped himself to a great spoonful of the stew, simmering on the crane, and then the three silently left the cabin.

Marcus looked at Narcissa. She clapped her hands softly. "Bravo! The prologue is a success. Now let's have supper."

"Well, the war chief is bound to leave us in peace," said Marcus. "But I hate the idea of bribery. I hope never to use it again."

"We'll see!" Narcissa's voice was suddenly a little despondent.

For several days they were left in peace; that is, there was no interference with their work, except such as came from the constant exhibition of curiosity on the part of the Indians. This was soon exhausted, as far as the doctor was concerned; but Narcissa, the first white woman in their experience, was an unceasing source of wonder to them.

At first, their interest was amusing to Narcissa, but after a day or so, it began to irritate her. They had absolutely no respect for her rights to privacy. She could not teach them not to walk into the cabin at any moment of the day or night, examine what she was doing, handle any of the objects in the dwelling, squat before the fire, help themselves to the food in the limited larder.

Marcus could not understand why Narcissa did not harden herself to this apparently ineradicable characteristic of the savage. It was not common sense, he insisted, to

allow what could not be helped to annoy one. But Narcissa retorted that, as long as she lived among the Indians, she would struggle for decent privacy.

One of the worst offenders was old Umtippe. He exhibited not the slightest friendliness for Narcissa, but he obviously considered that he owned the cabin and its contents. He spent hours of every day, sitting on the floor before the fire, spitting, dozing and making foul noises, while Narcissa worked at her language lessons or tried to ignore him, as she performed her simple household tasks.

One day, the cabin being for once clear of Indians, Narcissa made preparations for a bath. She lighted a huge fire and heated several pots full of water with which she filled the wash tub. She fastened the door blanket by ropes, which she twisted around pegs driven into the adobe, and further clinched her privacy, as she thought, by pushing the table against the door jambs.

She was standing naked in the tub, when the blanket was ripped aside, the table heaved over, and old Umtippe thrust himself angrily into the room.

"Why did you try to keep me out?" he demanded in Cayuse.

"Go!" cried Narcissa, in the same tongue, wrapping her wet body in a blanket and pointing to the door, with a beautiful bare arm.

"I'll not!" The chief was scowling in outraged dignity.

Narcissa had not yet acquired words with which to express what she felt. She stared at the old man, then deliberately she crossed the room and, clutching the blanket about her with one hand, with the other dealt Umtippe a sound box on the ear. "Go!" her eyes burning with anger. She struck him on either cheek.

The old man's eyes started from their sockets, so astounded was he by the suddenness of the onslaught. He raised his arm to return her blows but as he did so he

caught the look in Narcissa's great, blue eyes. Forty furies danced within them. He backed away. Meek-eyed squaws he understood, but not this golden-haired white woman, whom many of the Cayuse suspected of being a witch. Charley Compo, somewhat fearfully, indeed, already had told Narcissa of this and, recalling it, as she saw fear dawning in the chief's eyes, she emitted a banshee wail by running half a dozen scales, staccato and allegro.

Umtippe plunged backward through the door.

Narcissa jerked the curtain into place and flung herself into her clothes. She was still white with fury when Charley Compo arrived to give her her lesson. She bade him go and fetch Umtippe. He returned shortly, the old chief following him, somewhat reluctantly. Narcissa walked up to the chief and shook her finger in his face as she bade Compo interpret for her.

"You are never to come into my cabin again without rapping first," she said.

"The land is mine," said Umtippe, sullenly. "I'll come in here whenever I want to."

"The land you gave for the mission," replied Narcissa. "The cabin is ours. You will respect our rights or I'll have 'King George men' in red coats come here with guns to show you what our rights are."

"You are nothing but a squaw," said Umtippe. "And squaws who threaten the men are killed."

"Kill me! Try it!" cried Narcissa furiously. "And every night my spirit shall come to your tepee and sing your spirit out of your body. Every night, until you die, and long after, like this."

She waited until the startled Compo had translated the threat, then again she gave the banshee wail. Both Umtippe and Compo fled the cabin.

Narcissa stood, motionless, for a long moment, while slowly the color returned to her face. Then, with quiver-

ing lips, she dropped to her knees and bowed her beautiful head upon a log seat.

"Oh, heavenly Father!" she whispered. "Help me to endure this terrible country, these filthy savages, this loneliness! Let not my mad decision to come here, last January, bring unhappiness to Marcus, for he is good! Help me to be cheerful. For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen!"

Then there was silence and she crouched against the seat until the fire went out and the cold aroused her.

After supper, that night, she told Marcus of her encounter. He listened with horror and disapproval in every line of his open face.

"I wish I'd been here to boot him out!" was his first reaction. Then as the significance of what his wife had done came home to him, he exclaimed, "You've made an enemy of the chief!"

"He was my enemy from the first moment he saw me," said Narcissa.

"Nonsense! He was as simple and friendly as a child," declared the doctor. "You are too imaginative, Narcissa."

"At any rate, I've discovered what sort of a threat I can hold over these 'simple, childish' people," retorted Narcissa. "Something that will appeal to the diabolical side of them."

"Narcissa! Narcissa!" cried Marcus. "Don't you see how opposed this is to the policy I thought we'd agreed on? In five minutes, you roused in him what will take us months to live down."

"Do you suggest that I should have allowed Umtippe to witness my bath?" asked Narcissa, flushing.

"Of course not! Don't be silly! You should have come out to me as soon as you had wrapped yourself up."

"And what would you have done?"

"I'd have gotten Charley Compo and have explained to the old man how we felt and have told him it must not happen again."

Narcissa twisted her hands together. "But, Marcus! They are children! Back of the order, must be the threat."

"No! A thousand times, No!" thundered the doctor. "We are sent here to show the world how to win these savages by love. You must help me in this, Narcissa. Indeed, you must!"

"Marcus," replied Narcissa, "I wish to uphold your hands as I wish nothing else in life. But when religion interferes with common sense, I must let common sense rule. Umtippe is a selfish, cruel old man who, as soon as the novelty of our coming has passed, will join the Hudson's Bay Company's forces in trying to get rid of us. For aught we know, he may be in their pay now!"

"But you are accusing those Britishers of underhanded methods, I don't think they'd use against us, Narcissa. They are mighty honorable men, I know."

"So they are, in their own persons," agreed Narcissa. "But as representatives of their Company and of Queen Victoria, they're without bowels of compassion. All ordinary understanding of honor is subservient to their desire to further their country's interests."

"I have a great desire to help my own country to get in here," exclaimed Marcus. "But it wouldn't make me do dirty tricks. And I don't set myself up as a bit better than those fellows."

"Well, we'll see!" Narcissa sighed, then smiled. "Don't be cross with me, dear Marcus! I can't help being a woman. And that's what I was this afternoon, just an outraged female."

Marcus melted instantly. "Bless your dear heart! If I had my way, if duty didn't interfere, I'd shelter you from every wind that blows!"

He kissed her very gently, and so the disagreement, perhaps the most fundamentally important one that Marcus and Narcissa had had, was left.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITTLE WHITE CAYUSE

FOR several days, not only Umtippe, but all the other Indians, excepting Charley Compo, shunned the cabin, and the interpreter came only because his desire for tobacco outweighed his obvious uneasiness. Then, to Marcus' relief, about a week after the encounter, the entire village rode southward and Waii-lat-pu settled to winter solitude.

Two weeks from the day he left Fort Walla Walla Henry Spalding jogged up to the cabin. He looked thinner and more forlorn than ever, but was, on the whole, in a very cheerful frame of mind. He brought with him several pack-horse loads of supplies for Waii-lat-pu. His wife had remained at Fort Walla Walla, for she was not feeling well and they were to go to Lap-wai by canoe, up the Snake River, sending their supplies by pack train. Beside the freight, Spalding brought Narcissa a letter from Governor Simpson. She read it while the two men stabled the horses for the night.

"Fort Vancouver, Oregon Territory,
Dec. 1, 1836.

DEAR MADAM:

We were grieved that the onslaught of homesickness attacked you and Madam Spalding during our absence, thus depriving us of the opportunity to attempt to assuage your yearning by offering you some of the entertainments that hitherto had, we supposed, kept you content. We were greatly relieved to learn through the Rev. Mr. Spalding that you had reached Fort Walla Walla in good health and spirits.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

I have directed Factor Pambrun to keep a guardian eye on your mission and to render you any assistance he may.

It had been my hope to call upon you on my journey back to Montreal, but various matters having delayed me until the mountain passes are too deep in snow even for my wonderful Monique to attack them, I have determined to winter here. We would be very happy to have you and Dr. Whitman do us the honor of spending Christmas at Fort Vancouver. Dr. McLoughlin will send you the host's invitation later. We can offer you, I think, a unique experience in showing you how the great holiday may be spent in a British outpost.

I remain, dear Madam, with cordial expressions of regard for your good husband and yourself,

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE SIMPSON.

To Madam Narcissa Whitman
Waii-lat-pu

From the Hon. Geo. Simpson, Governor of Rupert's Land, by Commission of Sir John Pelly, Governor of the Company of Adventurers, Trading into Hudson's Bay."

Narcissa laid the letter on the table, while she completed her preparations for the evening meal. When Marcus came in, she silently handed it to him, and Marcus, after perusing it, gave it to Henry. The clergyman snorted as he finished it.

"Bigoted fool! Now, why should he write you, Narcissa, instead of the doctor?"

"Because I ran away, not Marcus. And I left a note of apology, not Marcus," replied Narcissa.

"I suppose you'll go up there, Christmas. He didn't ask Eliza and me. We're not his kind."

"Neither am I, as far as that goes!" Marcus laughed

good naturedly. "I'd dearly like to see Christmas at the fort. Yet we must not go." He looked at Narcissa, who nodded acquiescence.

"It's absurd to think of it. Our place is here. It is obvious that you had no trouble with them, Henry,"—she looked at him inquiringly.

"They treated me like a king!" declared Henry. "They've bowed to the inevitable and I must admit, they're doing it very pleasantly."

Narcissa looked doubtful but said nothing, and Marcus asked eagerly:

"What was the outcome of their hurried trip to meet the Spanish convoy, Henry?"

"I couldn't find out much," answered Henry, "except that some man was trying to bring in five hundred head of cattle to start a stock farm on the Columbia. Those two Britishers forced him to sell to them and they sent the Spaniard back to San Francisco. Have you had any trouble with the Cayuse?"

Marcus narrated their various experiences, omitting, however, to tell of Narcissa's trouble with Umtippe.

"I think you did wrong to begin bribing them," was Spalding's comment. "Though I haven't any idea of what else you could have done. How much land are you going to put under the plow in the spring?"

"Twenty-five acres if all goes well," replied Marcus.

"I saw Miles Goodyear up there. He sent you a letter too, Narcissa. I forgot it. Let's see! Where did I put it?" The clergyman began to go through his pockets and finally brought out a crumpled bit of paper. "He's swaggering round as if he owned all of Oregon. He was polite to me, though. Comical to see how he's taken on the manners of these factors."

"My correspondence is growing heavy!" laughed Narcissa. "I only wish they were letters from Angelica instead

of Fort Vancouver," she added, wistfully, as she unfolded the note and read it aloud.

"DEAR MRS. WHITMAN:

What do you think has happened to me now? Governor Simpson has hired me as his special handy man. I will have to be with him all winter and maybe I'll go to Montreal with him in the spring. I am to be trained as a courier. That's a fellow they can trust to carry messages for them. I expect I'll get to see you folks every once in a while. Governor Simpson says that you and the doctor put in a good word for me several times when other folks were running me down, and that as long as you two trusted me, he was sure I was worth trusting. Thanks, many times.

My respects to the doctor. Tell him the wagon is earning its keep at Fort Boise.

Yours respectfully,

MILES GOODYEAR."

"He told me something about working for the Governor, but I don't believe it," said Henry. "I wonder what he sees in that young monkey."

"It might be very useful to have a young American as his courier, here in Oregon," mused Marcus. "He's a smart man, Simpson. Now then, Henry, let's make a list of the division of supplies for you to give to William Gray."

Narcissa offered her assistance at this work, but finding she was not needed, she took up her sewing and receded into her own thoughts. They were many, and some of them were far afield. But all of them were colored by the fact which had helped her and Marcus to make their instant refusal of the Christmas invitation from the Governor. A baby was coming to Waii-lat-pu in the spring. And Narcissa was deeply glad, not only because she was happy in

the thought of motherhood, but because it, somehow, enhanced her already tremendous sense of loyalty to Marcus. She did not realize how pathetically this secret reiteration of devotion revealed a hunger that her marriage had not satisfied.

Spalding returned to Fort Walla Walla the following morning, and the Whitmans settled to their task of preparing the mission and themselves for saving souls. Before Compo had left for the winter, Narcissa had been able to draw from him practically his entire vocabulary. This she had written in a notebook, and now she worked several hours every day preparing a Cayuse-English, English-Cayuse grammar, which she tested on Marcus daily. The doctor was so persistent and Narcissa was so patient that, in spite of his supposedly tone deaf ear, Marcus made astonishing progress in learning to speak the primitive language.

Christmas passed quietly, with a special service in the cabin, attended only by the two missionaries. A heavy snow fell all Christmas day and for several days following. In fact, it was January before the sun shone brilliantly and a warm wind began to melt the snow, like a blast from an oven. Marcus, who had been chafing under his enforced idleness, was cheerfully watching bare patches appear in his new-cleared fields, one afternoon, when a lone horseman pushed up the heavy trail from the fort. He gave a loud "Halloo" as soon as he sighted Marcus.

It was William Gray.

The Whitmans had not seen a white man since Spalding's visit, and so young Gray was doubly welcome. They established him before a glowing fire and plied him with questions.

He had just returned from a visit to Fort Vancouver, to send mail by a possible Hudson's Bay Company boat and to purchase supplies. The Snake and the Columbia had

been full of ice, but he had made the journey without untoward event other than the usual hair-breadth escapes, inevitable on such a journey.

"This time," he said with a chuckle, "I went to Fort Vancouver, armed with my credentials from the American Board and with my passport from the Secretary of War. Well! Well! What a change! I was immediately elevated from the servant class and actually allowed to break bread with their majesties! Also they sold me what we needed, only charging me one hundred per cent. for the service! By the way, I just missed Jason Lee and Lieutenant Slacum, who'd been calling at the fort. Also I missed a wedding. 'Black' Douglas, as they call him, had just received a magistrate's commission from Queen Victoria and he united in the holy bonds of matrimony Mrs. Margaret McKay, widow of a former factor, known as Madam McLoughlin, and Dr. John McLoughlin!"

"Oh, I am so glad! So glad!" cried Narcissa. "Dear Madam McLoughlin, how proud she must be!"

"I doubt if it means much to her Indian soul," said Marcus.

"It wouldn't, had not Mrs. Beaver talked so to her," replied Narcissa. "Do go on, William, and tell us more news! We are starving for it. Let me give you more tea and take another piece of toast. Now, begin again!"

William grinned happily. "This is a mighty cheerful company after the Spalding gloom. Well, to proceed! Last fall, Spalding was told that it was a Spaniard that the Governor and factors had turned back with live stock. It wasn't a Spaniard. It was an American, named Ewing Young. It seems that the Spanish Governor of California sent word to Simpson that Young had stolen a herd of horses,—brood mares,—and was bringing them into Oregon. Simpson and his associates ordered him out of Oregon. Young swore he bought the horses, but no one believes him.

Anyhow, he obeyed the Hudson's Bay Company mandate to the extent of not bringing the horses north of the Columbia. He took them down near the Methodist mission on the Willamette. Then word goes abroad, 'Beware of Ewing Young, the bandit.' Every one, including Jason Lee, refused to sell him supplies, so Young decided he'd get even with every one by starting a distillery, under the very walls of the mission, where Lee has gathered together all the ragtag and bobtail of this country."

"Poor Lee!" ejaculated Marcus. "I fear rum more than I do the worst Indian in the world."

"It makes the worst Indians in the world," said Gray. "Well, Jason Lee got up a petition which the Hudson's Bay Company signed with the mission, asking Young to give up the distillery and offering to pay for it. Young was surprisingly decent. He refused the money, but promised not to make rum."

"A great victory!" cried Narcissa.

"Yes, and no!" again William chuckled. "Young appeared to be taken with Jason Lee's religion, or something. Anyway, he and Lee and Slacum have formed a cattle company and Young has gone on Slacum's ship, to bring another consignment of cattle to the Willamette."

"Has Slacum left for good?" asked Narcissa, eagerly. "Do you know how he feels about Oregon?"

"I heard that he and Ewing Young became friends and they say that Young is so bitter about the Hudson's Bay Company that he can't hear the name uttered without cursing. Several Hudson's Bay employees took passage on Slacum's ship for San Francisco. Perhaps they'll be able to calm Young down."

Narcissa looked thoughtfully at the fire. The Hudson's Bay Company evidently had concluded that it was not the part of wisdom to detain an American naval officer against his will. But, if they had given Slacum up, she knew that

they had prepared some sort of checkmate for the effect of the officer's report to Congress.

"Well! Well!" exclaimed Marcus. "That is a news budget! Did you come back in Indian canoes as you went?"

"No," replied Gray. "I came back with Frank Ermatinger. He's a traveling trader for the Company. He's going out, now, to collect the winter's fur catch from the Flatheads up in the Flathead River country, northeast of here. He has his son with him and is going to try to send him out to the States to go to school."

"But is that possible, this time of year?" asked Marcus.

"Ermatinger hopes so. He'll go up to Clark's Fork of the Columbia, follow that to the Bitter Root, over Gibbon's Pass to the Jefferson Fork of the Missouri and so out. He'll travel by night and in storms when he's in Blackfoot and Sioux country. They're on the warpath."

Narcissa suddenly leaned forward. "William, go with him! Go to the American Board and tell them all that we have learned here and tell them to send more missionaries. What can our little group do with these thousands of savages? Tell them of the menace of the Hudson's Bay Company."

The two men stared at Narcissa, young Gray's blue eyes very bright, the doctor's, very thoughtful.

"Then you've heard the gossip about priests!" exclaimed William.

"No!" replied Narcissa and the doctor together.

"It's rumored, *via* a butler or some servant at Fort Vancouver, that Governor Simpson is asking that as many Catholic priests be sent in here, under the control of the Company, as there are Protestant missionaries."

"That settles it!" ejaculated Marcus. "You'd better take Narcissa's suggestion, William!"

"Are you willing to undertake such a terrible journey?" asked Narcissa.

"Willing!" Gray's eyes were dancing. "Well, aside from its being my obvious duty for the good of the mission work to go, I'd take a harder trip to be away from our dear Brother Spalding. He and I don't think alike on anything! Neither of us can keep our fool mouths shut, and poor Sister Spalding is worried miserable by the pair of us. Also," he grinned and blushed, "I want a wife! I'm delighted with an excuse for going back and getting one."

"You know a nice girl who will come?" asked Narcissa, smiling in turn. Gray was by no means a ladies' man.

"No, I don't," replied the young man with engaging candor, "but I'll get my mother to find me one."

"Good boy!" Marcus shouted with laughter. "What will Spalding say about our making this decision without him?"

"What can he say? I'll send an honest letter of apology and explanation by an Indian to-morrow. At heart, I know he'll be glad. Now, then, let's discuss exactly what I'm to say to the American Board, what supplies I'm to ask for, what errands I'm to do personally for you folks." Gray took an excited turn or two up and down the room.

There was little sleep in the cabin that night. Narcissa brought her diary letter up to date and gave it in charge to Gray, for her mother. Lists of supplies were made, and questions of policy on which a ruling from the American Board was desired. How much cropping of land was desirable? Should excess crops be sold or given away? These were questions that particularly agitated Marcus. But Narcissa desired a ruling on a matter far less definite.

"Ask them," she said, as she did up the package of letters, "how much they wish us to make ourselves subservient to the policies of the Hudson's Bay Company. Think of it!" she added, suddenly, "all that represents America, in

an organized way, in Oregon, is a handful of missionaries backed up by a few devoted religionists who avowedly have no political interest here. And England—think of the power and brains that represent her in Oregon!"

"I'll ask them, all right," agreed young Gray, "and I know exactly what their reply will be. They'll say we are sent out here to convert Indians and that we can have no interest in whether England or the States govern Oregon."

"Write down their reply, the moment you get it," said Marcus.

"And tell my mother and father how well and happy I am and go to see Eliza Spalding's people, and Henry's too, of course," said Narcissa.

Young Gray was fastening up his coat, preparatory to leaving. He dared not stop for sleep, lest he miss Frank Ermatinger.

"I'll take my wife to see them all," he declared. "And, beside her, I'll bring back at least two other missionary couples. See if I don't."

"God speed you in both undertakings, my boy!" said Marcus, clasping the young man's hand.

Gray shook hands heartily with Narcissa and hurried out to mount his horse, which Marcus had brought to the door. It was still long before dawn. Narcissa stood in the doorway, holding a candle, and the little wavering gleam caught the young man's gay smile as he waved his hands and set spurs to his horse.

Only a trip to the North Pole is comparable, to-day, to the ardors and dangers of the journey he was so lightly undertaking.

The weather on the Walla Walla continued to moderate, and by the end of January Marcus started his plowing. The Indians, too, began to drift back with the warmer days and Marcus started to hold Sunday services for the Indians. For the present, Narcissa took no part in these. As little

by little, the deserted village returned to life, Narcissa watched the smoke appear from the tops of the different lodges, with a curious lack of excitement. It was as if every interest in her life had receded, to permit her to concentrate her whole being on the coming of her baby. As the time drew near for her confinement, all her deep concern over the machinations of the Hudson's Bay Company dropped from the foreground of her thought. Her anxiety over her duty to Marcus, her apprehensions over his Indian policy, for the time being ceased to trouble her. She was homesick. She longed unspeakably for her mother. But even this pain, constant as it was, could not rouse her from her dreamlike joy over the child.

The Pambruns came out to see her several times and Madam Pambrun, with one of her young daughters, undertook to stay with Narcissa as nurse and companion, for a week before, and a week after the baby's birth. Narcissa liked the little Indian woman. She was extraordinarily gentle and full of a poetic imagination that constantly surprised and charmed the white woman. Pierre Pambrun was consideration itself. He refused to allow any of the pupils that Governor Simpson and Dr. McLoughlin had assigned to Narcissa to come to Waii-lat-pu until Narcissa should be strong again. In fact, the arrival of the first white child born in the Oregon territory was awaited with keen interest by all that isolated countryside.

Lone trappers traveled a hundred miles or so from their posts to leave a choice fur for the layette. Madam McLoughlin sent some exquisite little moccasins she had beaded. Dr. McLoughlin sent fresh apples to tempt Narcissa, who, he heard, had sickened of a meat diet. And Governor Simpson sent an exquisitely tanned beaver cloak for Narcissa, herself. The Cayuse, who lived at Waii-lat-pu, showed an unexpected interest in the event. Old Umtippe forgot his sulks and announced that this child

would be known as the little White Cayuse and would be adopted by the tribe.

The baby came on the fourteenth of March, causing as little discomfort as one could hope to cause in arriving in this world of discomforts. It was a little girl: an exceptionally fine specimen of babyhood. She looked like her mother, in coloring and features, and had the unusual stature and strength of both parents. They named her Alice Clarissa, after her two grandmothers.

Madam Pambrun was distressed that Narcissa would not allow the baby to be strapped to a baby board, Indian fashion, as soon as it was born, and she and Marcus made such difficult work of washing and dressing the child that, after the second day, Narcissa sat up in bed and attended to it, herself. And on the third day, Narcissa was so well that the doctor allowed her to have visitors.

Old Umtippe, who had been kept out only by the new barred door which Marcus had completed in January, was the first caller. He wore all his usual regalia, with the addition of a huge buffalo robe over his shoulders and a headdress of buffalo horns superimposed on the white horse's tail. He lifted the baby from Madam Pambrun's arms and gave her a thorough examination. This done, he grunted approbation, cleared his throat, and holding Alice Clarissa in the crook of his arm he delivered an address of welcome.

"The little White Cayuse is here! All the people expected her: Cayuse, Nez Percés, Walla Wallapoos. All the tribe is pleased that a white child is born on its land. All the chiefs will visit her and talk. But I, when she grows up, will give her land and horses and make her rich."

He laid the baby on the bed and stalked out, as abruptly as he had entered.

All the chiefs and, indeed, it seemed to the weary Nar-

cissa, all the braves and all the squaws too, did visit the baby during the next week. It was astonishing to observe their interest. The adulation they offered the child was something to ponder on. It convinced Narcissa, more than ever, that Indian character was more complex than she or the other missionaries had dreamed it could be.

Madam Pambrun was obliged to return to the fort, when the baby was a week old, and Marcus persuaded Narcissa to try to use the Cayuse midwife, old Tua, for a day or so, as the baby's nurse. During the few hours that Narcissa permitted the experiment to last, the old lady had a heavenly time. She, of course, handled and tested every article in the house. Then, heedless of Narcissa's protests, fished from the keg in the larder a week's supply of pickled pork, settled herself upon the buffalo robe before the fire and devoured it, raw and dripping with vinegar and salt. Having finished the meal, she curled herself up like a wizened brown bear and went to sleep. Narcissa, lying on the bed in the corner, with the baby beside her, watched the performance with an irritation that yielded finally to laughter, and while Tua snored and the fire brought the sickening, unwashed odor from her clothing, she sang softly to Alice Clarissa and waited for Marcus to return from the field. He removed the old gourmand and gave up any immediate hope of making the Cayuse useful.

The baby was two weeks old, when Umtippe made his second visit. He went so far as to rap at the door, but then walked in without waiting for Narcissa's reply. She was just lifting the baby from her bath. With a harsh exclamation, he strode across the room and, snatching Alice Clarissa from her mother, rolled her in the tail of his blanket and clasped her to his breast.

"You will kill the child!" he cried, "and the spirits will punish my tribe!"

By a supreme effort of will Narcissa did not move.

"Give her back to me, at once!" she said. "There are no spirits. God sent the baby to me."

Umtippe looked down at the screaming child. "She is a gift to the Cayuse tribe," he grunted.

"Unless you let me care for my baby, the way God taught me," said Narcissa, "I shall not teach her how to sing."

This, obviously, was a new idea to the chief. He stood holding the little naked thing in his dirty blanket, quite unmoved by the sobs that were rending Narcissa's heart. After long communion with himself, during which Narcissa watched him, with the look of a mother wolf in her blue eyes, he laid the baby back in her arms.

"If you kill her," he warned, "the Cayuse will punish you."

"If I'm not good to her," returned Narcissa, "God will punish me." And she proceeded to wash the baby again.

Whether he thought his presence would be a protection to the little White Cayuse during the process of bathing, which she patently hated very much, or whether he enjoyed watching it as an especially fine exhibit of the idiocy of the white woman, or not, Narcissa did not know. But, for whatever reason, until the middle of April, each morning saw old Umtippe, with a friend or a visiting chief, solemnly watching Narcissa bathe her daughter. Narcissa dared not rouse his antagonism, and so his intrusion on this sweetest rite of motherhood lasted until the camas harvest opened in mid-spring. Then the whole tribe scattered over the plains to gather the succulent lily bulb and, for a little while, Narcissa was relieved of the old chief's presence.

The tribe was gone nearly a month and a great quiet reigned at Waii-lat-pu. Marcus finished the planting of some twenty acres of wheat and corn and made his garden patch. Narcissa spent long hours out of doors, working on her Cayuse grammar, the baby in its cradle beside her. The plains were a rich green, spangled with flowers of

every hue. The willows and cottonwoods by the river were filled with singing birds. The twenty acres that Marcus had planted began to show a fuzz of green, and the garden, orderly emerald rows.

Narcissa was sitting thus, one lovely April afternoon, when, without warning, Governor Simpson rode through the gate. He dismounted as Narcissa rose to greet him.

"Where are the bagpipe players, Governor?" she exclaimed. "Has 'Malbrouck gone a-fighting' without their knowledge?"

The Governor took both her hands and kissed them, bowing as he did so.

"I feared they'd waken the baby!" he replied. "Ah, there she is! Be Gad, that's a fine child!" stooping over Alice Clarissa, who raised to his, eyes the color of the Oregon skies. "She looks like you, madam. I am glad of that!"—straightening himself abruptly to gaze at Narcissa, who in the simple print frock she had made herself seemed to him as impressive as she had been in broadcloth and silk. "Where is Dr. Whitman, this afternoon?" he continued.

"He went up to the foothills, yonder, for a log. I expect him shortly."

"I may stay not longer than an hour," said the Governor, "for Monique has orders to leave Fort Walla Walla at daybreak for the Fraser River."

"Marcus will want to see you, Governor. If you will rest, here, I will make you a cup of tea." Narcissa pointed to the seat she had just vacated.

Simpson's eyes rested on her slender hand. It already was roughened by hard work. "You have no servant?" he said.

"Even if I had one," replied Narcissa, passing on into the house, "I'd like to serve your tea myself."

The Governor's cold eyes lighted with warmth. He re-

turned Narcissa's smile and went off to put his horse in the corral. When he came back, Narcissa had the tea and toast waiting for him and had brought out a second seat. There was a moment of silence, then the Governor said:

"I have asked McLoughlin to send a young girl here for your care. She is, I believe, about sixteen, though she looks about twelve. She is a half-breed. Her mother was a chief's daughter and although only an aborigine, a woman of fire and poetry. This girl, who would be looked on as an outcast by most white women, will in a few years have great influence with certain of the tribes of Rupert's Land. If she learns how to meet white people of position, she will become invaluable to the Hudson's Bay Company. Please send a bill for her board and tuition, each quarter, to the chief clerk at Fort Vancouver."

A look of astonishment and, at the same time, of amusement showed in Narcissa's eyes and quivered on her lips. She rose and made a deep curtsey.

"'Malbrouck' has spoken!" she said, and sat down again.

Simpson stared at her haughtily, then threw back his head and laughed. "I beg your pardon, my dear Madam Whitman! You take a graceful method of reminding me that you are not a Hudson's Bay Company employee!"

"How canny, indeed, you are, my dear Governor!" retorted Narcissa.

"Hum!" murmured Simpson. "Curious people, you Americans! But you are quite right. I'll try again. . . . As you so graciously agreed to do, while at Fort Vancouver—"

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Of course, I'll be glad to do what I can for the child; not only for friendship for you, but because the money will be most welcome. What language does she speak?"

"French and several Indian dialects. Madam,"—leaning

toward Narcissa with sudden bitterness in his voice,—"she has been grossly neglected and ill-treated. Life is not fair to such as she!"

"Life," said Narcissa, "as nearly as I can understand, was not planned to be fair. It was designed as it is, to discipline the soul for some great end of God's. Christ showed us how to endure that discipline."

"Beside being an American, you are a Puritan!" exclaimed Simpson. "How can you, who are an artist, literally to your finger-tips, embrace the bleak tenets of such a faith?"

"I need such tenets the more, because I am an artist," answered Narcissa. "After all, is my faith more bleak than is your hard philosophy?"

"Hard?" The Governor looked astonished.

"Yes, so they tell me. And I have learned for myself that you are ruthless."

"Ruthless! Madam, if I were ruthless, I'd be Lochinvar at this moment." His eyes, fixed on Narcissa's, were deep with pain.

She held his gaze for a moment, then she deliberately lifted her baby from the cradle and held it in her arms, crooning softly the silly and pathetic little lullaby.

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top—"

The Governor listened, his stern face softening indescribably. When she stopped, with a single verse, he said:

"And I've never heard you sing before! Will you not, dear Madam Whitman, sing to your child and me? Something that I may carry away with me! Perhaps that 'Poor Exile of Erin,' of which Miles Goodyear talks so much."

Narcissa, a strong hand gently patting the sleeping baby, looked at the Scotchman with a smile that was so tender, so patient, that he wondered a little wistfully if she were thinking more of the child than of him; and then the rounded, lovely notes floated out on the quiet air:

"There came to the shore, a poor exile of Erin,
The dew on his mantle was heavy and chill—"

Simpson leaned back in the crude chair, his riding crop across his knees, his arms folded before him. Heaven knows, it was an unforgettable picture: the exquisite outlines of Mount Hood, so evanescently blue one could not always be sure which was Oregon sky and which was mountain peak: the crude mud cabin, the cradle, with its coverings of fur, and the woman in the blue print dress, with the sleeping child on her knees, singing the simple ballad as he knew many a prima donna would have been glad to sing it.

He sat silent, so long after the last note had died down, that Narcissa wondered if he were disappointed. She continued to pat the baby, however, and again smiled at him.

"But why," he asked at last, "why this," waving his hand at the cabin, "when you have such a voice and have received such training?"

"I suppose," replied Narcissa slowly, "it's a part of that discipline of the soul we spoke of. I need more than most people; more than Marcus, for example."

"Nonsense!" The Governor spoke bruskly. "Nonsense! That's mere cant! I refuse to permit our friendship to descend to mere catch-penny, religious phrases. . . . Some day," leaning forward and touching the patient hand that hushed the baby, "I shall persuade you to confide in me the story of the storms that have ravished your heart. I'm glad you have the child!"

"So am I!" Narcissa smiled. "And I'm glad I have Marcus, too." Then she said cheerfully, "So you have added our young Miles Goodyear to your entourage! What are you going to make of him?"

"A British subject!" declared Simpson.

"Never!" exclaimed Narcissa, laughing. Then she said suddenly, "We have twenty acres planted to wheat and a five-acre vegetable garden. We both speak Cayuse fairly well and have begun to hold services regularly. The Indians come in hordes."

"To hear you sing and see the baby. Yes, I've heard," returned the Governor placidly.

"You are very sure of your control of the situation!" said Narcissa softly. "I'd give much to know if Lieutenant Slacum will reach Washington in safety!"

"So would I!" Simpson chuckled. "Well! Well! All my little plans seem feckless, eh?"

"I don't like your cheerfulness in the face of these small disasters," Narcissa was smiling.

"One learns," said the Governor, "after one sweats blood over a situation and fails, that often within the situation itself lie the materials for its own checkmating."

"You have concluded that about us, have you?" mused Narcissa, eyeing the Scotchman thoughtfully. Then she rose to put Alice Clarissa in her cradle.

"I must be away at once," exclaimed the Governor, looking at his watch.

"But yonder comes the doctor!" protested Narcissa. "Can't you wait for him? He's not more than a mile away."

"I'll ride up and greet him. I cannot wait for him, at the snail's pace he's traveling," said Simpson. He took Narcissa's hand between both his own. "Dear Madam Whitman, I have been rebuked and sustained, fed in body and soul, this afternoon. How can I thank you?"

"I suppose that is what friendship does for people," replied Narcissa simply.

"It's what your friendship does for me. I don't know when we shall meet again, Narcissa. . . . I shall not forget

you and your little child here, with only Mount Hood to guard you. Good-by! God be wi' ye, my dear!"

"Good-by, 'Malbrouck'!" smiling with eyes that flashed tears.

He turned abruptly and strode to the corral.

Narcissa stood beside the cradle, watching him gallop across the plains. She watched him stop before Marcus, watched them hold a little parley, watched the Governor lift his beaver hat and turn his horse, watched him gallop out of sight down the west trail, then watched Marcus, a tiny, slow moving figure, leading a horse that she knew snaked a great log behind it. It would be another hour, before Marcus would be home. How lonely it was! How very lonely!

It was the day after the Governor's visit, that Charley Compo reported to the doctor that many of the Cayuse were ill of a violent bowel trouble. Compo was eager for Marcus to attend the sick people; but for several days Umtippe would not permit this, and the *te-wat* (medicine man) worked with rattle and incantations, day and night. Then Umtippe's favorite wife was laid low and the *te-wat* was unable to relieve her. When she had been in agony for twenty-four hours, the old chief came to the cabin. The Whitmans were at dinner.

"Come and see my squaw!" he ordered. "If she dies, I shall kill you and the *te-wat* too!"

"That's a tempting fee, indeed!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Don't you think of going, Marcus!"

Marcus rose. "This is my chance to compete with the baby and with your voice, for a hold on the Indians," he declared with a smile, and he followed Umtippe.

The squaw lay on a heap of dried grass in Umtippe's lodge. When Marcus knelt beside her to make his examination, the *te-wat* stalked out, with an angry snort. The

woman gave Marcus a look of abject terror, but Umtippe, watching the doctor's every motion, barked an order at her and she uttered no protest. Outside the lodge, those who were not ill gathered in hostile groups.

The squaw was suffering from an acute indigestion caused, the doctor thought, by gorging on the camas root. He prepared for a long fight, and made no attempt to leave the lodge for nearly twenty-four hours. Narcissa, apprehensive and sleepless, kept Charley Compo traveling back and forth between the lodge and the cabin, to inform her of the progress of events and also to give Marcus his meals.

All the skill that the doctor possessed, all his courage, all his faith, and he had much of all three, he devoted to fighting the poison with which the pitiful little brown body on the heap of grass was drenched. At the end of the twenty-four hours he looked up at the watching Umtippe.

"She's in a natural sleep," he said. "The fever is gone. She will live. Let her sleep as long as she will." And staggering with weariness, he left the lodge and returned to the anxious Narcissa. Weary as he was, he was more exhilarated than Narcissa had seen him for months.

"We can begin to save their souls now I've begun to save their bodies," he exclaimed, as he dropped on the bed to make up his lost sleep.

Narcissa watched him, long after he had slipped into heavy slumber. He was thin and careworn and looked older than his thirty-six years. He never complained. Narcissa wondered if he ever felt the consuming loneliness that haunted her. She doubted it. He was doing the work he loved best and he was with the human being he cared for most. What could any one ask more of life?

The next morning, while Narcissa and Marcus were dressing, Umtippe walked in upon them. His wife was nearly well, he announced, but his brother, the war chief, was now sick and the doctor must come at once. Marcus

groaned, but hurried after the old despot. However, at the door of the war chief's lodge, Umtippe's despotism ceased to function. His brother would have none of the white doctor. The *te-wat* stood looking down at the war chief, who was doubled up with agony.

"The white medicine man wants you," said the *te-wat.*

"Get him out of here!" howled the war chief.

Umtippe grunted. "Huh! If the white man goes and my brother dies, you die too."

"He will not die!" declared the very tired looking *te-wat,* beginning to shake his rattle again.

Marcus, not without relief, returned to his breakfast.

All day the rattle and the hoarse chant sounded from the war chief's lodge. But, at sunset, both sounds ceased abruptly and a figure rushed from the lodge, crossed the river and appeared breathless before the Whitmans, who were seated in their doorway. It was the *te-wat.*

"Tell me how you cure them!" he panted. "Tell me or Umtippe will follow the custom and kill me!"

"How is the war chief?" asked Marcus.

"Only your God can save him now," groaned the *te-wat.* "Speak to your God quickly."

Marcus rose to fetch his medicine case. But he was spared making this professional call, for a tall figure, with a great buffalo skin over the shoulders, strode resolutely through the sunset glow, across the field of tender growing wheat, through the orderly rows of the garden and up the dooryard. The *te-wat,* sensing the approach, in the Whitmans' apprehensive eyes, turned to look. Umtippe was upon him. And before he could raise a hand to protect himself, the chief brought his tomahawk down on the medicine man's bare head. Without a sound, the *te-wat* rolled at Narcissa's feet, his brains oozing over the doorstep.

Narcissa screamed, holding her baby convulsively to her breast.

"My brother, the war chief, is dead," said Umtippe, calmly.

The doctor's Cayuse failed him entirely. "You red fiend!" he roared in English. "What do you mean by bringing your murders to our doorstep? Go in, Narcissa, and close the door. Here, you Umtippe, help me to carry this body away!"

But Umtippe was recrossing the garden patch to his lodge.

When, some time later, the doctor came into the cabin, he found both fire and candlelight, and Narcissa on her knees in prayer. Not a little shaken himself, Marcus knelt beside her and joined his voice with hers. When, however, they had risen and were preparing for bed, Marcus said solemnly:

"If the Lord deals as harshly as this with all our enemies, our path will not be so difficult!"

Narcissa nodded. There was something curiously like destiny being on the side of the missionaries in this death.

CHAPTER IX

TREACHERY

THE murder received only casual attention from the Cayuse. Death was a common punishment for the *te-wat* who had failed of his task. Even the doctor, after the first shock, took the matter calmly. But the horror of the murder; that terrible smear of blood and brains on the doorstep, Umtippe's devilish face, shook the very foundations of Narcissa's mind.

To what horrors had she committed herself, that January afternoon, in Angelica, only a little over a year ago, when she had agreed to marry Marcus Whitman? And to what horror had she committed her child? Could God have wished her to sacrifice herself and her baby, had He wished Marcus to sacrifice himself, to the hope of saving a man like Umtippe?

Yet, for what else had she come to the Columbia? Had she not been wickedly dilatory? Had she not permitted her mind to be swayed by many other interests, away from the paramount duty of the life she had voluntarily embraced? Had she not for months delayed beginning active work in salvaging souls, because of distaste for the task? And had not God found it necessary to overwhelm her with this horror in order to return her to the path which she had promised Him to follow?

After all, musician and artist though she was, Narcissa possessed the religious convictions of her family and her generation. Lying awake far into the night, she convinced herself that God, for a very patent reason, had brought Umtippe so repeatedly and so unpleasantly to her attention. He wanted her to convert the old Cayuse chief. For if

Umtippe became a Christian the rest of the tribe would follow.

It was dawn before Narcissa fell asleep.

So tremendous a thing as the murder, Narcissa took for granted, would upset Umtippe's daily routine. She thought, with a sigh of relief, as she prepared breakfast the next morning, that the funerals of the war chief and the *te-wat* would occupy the chief for a day or so, giving her a breathing spell in which to arrange her campaign for capturing his soul for the Almighty. But she was to discover that she knew very little about Umtippe. Alice Clarissa was still in her bath that morning, when a shadow fell on the threshold. Umtippe gave his perfunctory rap and came in, seating himself on the floor in his usual place to the right of the fire.

For a moment, such a wave of repugnance swept over Narcissa that she could neither speak to the old man nor go on washing the baby's face. She set her teeth, fastened her eyes on the baby's lovely, squirming little body and, somehow, found sufficient self control to go on with her work.

Usually, when she began to dress Alice Clarissa, Umtippe departed. But this morning, as if he resented Narcissa's silence, for it was her custom to sing over this task, he did not budge. Narcissa fastened the little dress, praying that he might go. It was nap time for the baby and meal time as well. She made a long business of putting away the bath things, the crying baby tucked under one arm. Umtippe eyed her impatiently. Finally, he grunted and pointed to the rocking chair that Madam Pambrun had given Narcissa.

"Feed the child!" he ordered, "and sing the song you always sing."

For a moment, Narcissa hesitated, then slowly she seated herself, turning her back deliberately on the old chief and

gave Alice Clarissa her second breakfast, singing as she did so in her moving, tender voice:

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top!
When the wind blows the cradle will rock.
If the bough breaks, the cradle will fall
And down will come baby, cradle and all!"

Umtippe, with tear-blinded eyes, watched Narcissa lay the baby in the cradle, then he rose slowly.

"We go on the buffalo hunt, to-morrow," he said, "those of my people who are well. See to it that your buck attends to the sick we leave behind. There is no *te-wat.*"

"And if any one died in his care, you would kill him when you came home, would you?" asked Narcissa.

"Why shouldn't he pay a life for a life?" demanded the Cayuse.

"Because, although he may lose some lives, he saves many more," answered Narcissa, "and because God says, it is wrong to kill deliberately."

"Your God is foolish," said Umtippe, coolly. "Perhaps I will not kill the doctor. Perhaps I'll only take back my land."

"You will do neither," declared Narcissa, "because if you do I will take my baby and return to my own people."

"The little White Cayuse is a member of my tribe. You will never live to cross the Blue Mountains with her."

"What do you suppose," asked Narcissa suddenly, "that the Hudson's Bay Company would do to you if you killed us?"

"They'd say, good! They want no one here who plows the land. Neither do we Indians want such."

A sudden emotion rose in Narcissa that seemed to shake her very heartstrings. She walked up to the chief with that something dramatic in her stride that was inherent in

Narcissa's every gesture. The words rushed from her with the impressive fury of the day he had surprised her at her bath.

"Let me warn you of this, Umtippe! We shall not be killed, the doctor and I, until every foot of Waii-lat-pu is under the plow and until we have shown the great white peoples to the east that they can come with their families and sow and reap all the valleys between Fort Hall and Fort Vancouver! We shall not die, Umtippe, before you have cast yourself on your knees, asking our God to forgive you for a murdering villain and until we have brought to God's house every mother and baby of your tribe."

"And how will you show this to the peoples of the east?" sneered the chief. "The Hudson's Bay Company and the Indians, we hold this land. Either the Company or the Indians will slay you in the end."

"Perhaps they will," returned Narcissa, chin up, lips white, eyes seeing before her years of unrequited, unremitting toil and suffering, "perhaps they will, but before that time we shall have opened the door."

"Huh!" grunted Umtippe. "You are a fool! Watch the little White Cayuse while I am on the buffalo hunt and the salmon fishing." He gave her a look of indescribable insolence and left the cabin.

Narcissa, with trembling fingers and eyes still burning, began the work she had planned overnight: a Cayuse primer which she would use in the school she wished to open when the Indians returned to the encampment, after the summer hunt.

Marcus, returning at noon from his work—he was erecting a small grist mill on the creek—found her still with brilliant cheeks.

"You are a very beautiful woman, Narcissa!" he said. "And you belong to me!" with a sudden softening of his voice. He paused, started to say grace, then reached across

the crude table to touch her hand. "Narcissa, are you happy? Tell me that you are and that you are beginning to love me! I need your love. You'll never dream how I starve for it."

"Marcus—" Narcissa faltered, and her eyes filled with tears. She would have given her right hand to have made the reply he craved. She sought vainly for some phrase that would please him, yet that would be honest.

Her hesitation, in the face of his depth of love, cut Marcus to the quick. He thrust his plate from him, rose, and without a word, returned to his work at the mill. Narcissa sat motionless for a time, then cleared away the table and took up the primer again. When Marcus returned for his supper, it was with a calm face. He had found solace in work and in prayer and their evening meal passed as usual.

Two weeks after Governor Simpson's call, Pierre Pambrun appeared, one spring evening, accompanied by a young girl in a tattered deerskin dress.

"This," he said to Narcissa, with a flourish, "is a *bonne* for your baby, sent at the request of Governor Simpson."

The child, for she did not look to be over twelve, in spite of the sixteen years the Governor had claimed for her, looked up at Narcissa belligerently. She had a tiny oval face, entirely dominated by a pair of magnificent gray eyes. Her complexion, what one could discover of it through dirt, was a clear olive. Her hair, a light, waving brown, was braided with strips of red cloth. She showed the effects of undernourishment and her expression was the hostile expression of a child that has been abused and neglected.

"What is your name, my dear?" asked Narcissa, in French.

The girl did not reply and Pambrun said, "The Governor wants you to give her an English name."

Narcissa nodded. "We'll call her Sarah Hall, then, after our friend."

Marcus, who had been watching the newcomer with a professional eye, now spoke for the first time. "If you plan to keep her in the house, right along, Narcissa, I had better give her a thorough examination, first. I wouldn't have her come within a mile of Alice Clarissa as she is."

"My wife wanted to clean her up," said Pambrun, apologetically, "but the Governor's orders were that she was to come direct from the boat to you. So she had to be satisfied with sending out a bundle of Julia's clothes. I suppose that he wanted to appeal to your pity."

"He has succeeded!" exclaimed Narcissa.

She took the child into the corner of the cabin which she had curtained off for a dressing room and attempted, as she made explanations in French, to undress her. But Sarah Hall had not the slightest intention of being either undressed or examined. She refused to allow the filthy deerskin tunic to be removed, and set up a howl that brought both men into the dressing room.

"Madam, bribe her with food!" suggested Pambrun.

"I'd forgotten she was half Indian!" said Narcissa, with a laugh.

She produced a great slice of bread, smeared with sugar, and offered it to Sarah, in exchange for her dress. The trade was effected at once, and at the price of about half a loaf of bread, doled out in sugar-covered slices, the work of salvage went on smoothly. In about an hour, Sarah Hall, with a close-clipped head and wearing little Julia Pambrun's clothing, sat rocking Alice Clarissa's cradle. Her solemn little face gave every evidence of a great content.

"That's a good deed from every point of view," said Pambrun, smoking peacefully before the fire, while the doctor helped Narcissa to prepare supper. "The same boat that brought Sarah," he went on, "brought word that Ermatinger and Gray passed safely through the Sioux

and Blackfoot country. He's a wonderful plainsman, Ermatinger."

"One of the trappers at the 'Rendezvous,'" said Narcissa, "called him the 'Watch-dog of the Frontier,' for your Company. He hasn't visited us yet. When he does, I suspect it will be to encourage us to give up our work."

"He's an excellent man," Pambrun chuckled. "He will keep your fiery young Gray in order, by being still more fiery himself. By the way, Sarah Hall is Catholic." This, with a curious glance at Marcus.

"Are you sure? What made her Catholic?" demanded the doctor.

"I gave the order," replied the factor. "A priest happened to be at the fort to-day and he baptized her. He will be at the fort permanently."

"The baptism shall not stand," said Marcus sharply. "We were asked to take full charge of this girl. She shall be brought up a Protestant."

"Where did the priest come from, Mr. Pambrun?" Narcissa asked, hoping to avert an argument. "Does his coming mean that the Hudson's Bay Company is openly espousing Catholicism on the Columbia?"

"Yes and no!" replied the factor. "The Company, as such, isn't Catholic. But observe! In spite of all our efforts, it is impossible to keep missionaries out. Suppose that only Protestant missionaries come! Their first idea is to civilize the savages, to teach them to till the soil. Is that not directly opposed to the policy of the Company? Suppose that Catholic missionaries come. They wish to baptize the Indians, but they encourage them in their natural arts; hunting and fishing. How can you expect the Hudson's Bay Company not to import Catholic priests, all things considered?"

"But you are not giving us all the considerations, Pambrun!" said Marcus, quickly. "There is another essential

point. The Jesuits you bring in are finished politicians. They will undermine us in a thousand ways that we can neither meet nor understand! Good heavens! Was not the work difficult enough before, that we must fight these snakes?"

The factor flushed and rose. "You forget that I am a Catholic, Dr. Whitman!"

"And our very dear friend!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Our very dear friend, placed in a most difficult position."

"Yes, madam! Yes!" Pambrun sank back again.

"No one knows that better than I do," said Marcus in an apologetic voice. "But I'm a plain man and when I think of adding fighting of intrigue to the difficulties of converting Indians, I feel like blowing up."

The supper was on the table now. Sarah Hall was asleep on the floor beside the cradle. Narcissa tucked a blanket over the child, then took her place behind the teapot.

"Mr. Pambrun," she said, after they all had been served with antelope steak and potatoes, "I want to ask you one or two questions, not with the idea of embarrassing you, but just to help Marcus and me to know where we stand. First, will not the main business of the priests be to get rid of us?"

"Madam, indeed, I cannot answer that question!" The factor half choked over his food.

"You have answered me, Mr. Pambrun," observed Narcissa, gravely. "My second question is, will not this priest try to turn you against us?"

"That he cannot do," replied the factor, "as long as you do not work against the priest. His name, by the way, is Père Demers. Père Blanchet will be at Fort Vancouver."

"How can we help working against the priests?" asked Marcus, "when our business in Oregon is to bring our own religion to the Indians?"

"Then you must concentrate on the Indians and not on

the priests," said Pambrun, drily. "Incidentally, instead of looking for enemies in my house, I suggest that you search your own!"

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the doctor.

"Yesterday," said the factor, "an Indian courier came in from Lap-wai. He carried letters from Spalding for the eastward Express. He had been under water when his canoe misbehaved and the mail was wet; so wet that some of the addresses were obliterated. Those I opened to find the address and send them on. One, I found, was to your American Board at Boston, sent, I suppose, to counteract anything your William Gray might report. Your dear friend, Spalding, was writing to ask that Dr. and Madam Whitman be withdrawn, Gray given this mission and Spalding made head of both. He said that the doctor was treating the mission as his private property, was giving more time to doctoring than to saving souls. He said that Madam Whitman was a cold woman, who considered herself entirely above mission work. He clinched these statements by saying that you had no converts, against his own twenty-five."

Marcus jumped to his feet. "Where is that letter?" he roared, his face purple. "I'll take it to Lap-wai and make Henry Spalding eat it!"

"But I could not detain mail!" cried Pambrun. "It's against the rules of the Company. I had to re-address it and it's on its way now to Montreal."

Marcus' face was livid. "Do you call that the act of a friend?" he shouted.

"It was mail intrusted to my Company!" cried Pambrun, angrily. "It had to go on with all speed."

Marcus sprang toward the wall where his saddle-bags hung. "I don't so much care what he says about me, but I'll thrash him for his slurs on my wife!"

Narcissa watched Marcus, surprised by the degree of

anger he showed. She was accustomed to his frequent little blow-offs of temper, but this headlong fury was unusual. She knew that unless she set off a countermine, he was perfectly capable of starting to Lap-wai, that moment, and making an irretrievable break with Henry Spalding. So, pale but calm, she sprang her counterblast.

"Marcus! Marcus! There was a certain amount of truth in what Henry said about me. I am not, by nature, fitted to be a missionary."

Marcus dropped the saddle-bags to the floor and stared at Narcissa, his eyes astounded and reproachful. Pambrun, his blond head turning, in consternation, from husband to wife, exclaimed regretfully:

"I wish I'd told nothing!"

"But why?" cried Narcissa. "I hope I've got sufficient courage to bear knowing what my friends think of me!"

"Friends!" roared Marcus. "Friends! Narcissa, I don't understand you! What are you trying to say? That you regret being a missionary?"

Narcissa looked up at Marcus. The candlelight caught the long line of her chin and neck and made a ruby of the little white cameo pin which fastened her blue calico dress at the neck. One long hand pressed tensely against the table.

"I've had moments of deep regret," she said.

"Don't say that, Narcissa!" begged Marcus. "Don't!"

Narcissa smiled. "Don't take it so hard, Marcus! You wouldn't think it very serious if you or Henry or William Gray expressed regret over choosing this work."

"The comparison isn't fair," declared Marcus, excitedly. "Your feeling that way is the result of all sorts of things in your previous life that couldn't have happened to simple folks like those other men or me. When you admit regret, it's serious, and you know it."

"My admission means nothing," insisted Narcissa, "ex-

cept that I'm having a much more difficult time to train myself to do missionary work successfully than the rest of you. I'm merely saying that Henry has some grounds for his criticisms of me—though I'm not cold—! As to what he says about you and as for his asking for our withdrawal, I'm just as angry about it as you are."

"Yes, you look it!" growled Marcus, gazing half resentfully and half admiringly into his wife's steady eyes.

"And I'll add something more!" Narcissa was half laughing now. "If you didn't feel that there was some basis for Henry's remarks about me, you wouldn't be half so angry as you are!"

"You have no right—" began Marcus explosively.

Narcissa rose, put her arm about his great waist and rubbed her cheek against his. "I love your loyalty, Marcus! But let's leave Henry's letter to William Gray."

"But how can we know that Gray will stick up for us?" asked Marcus, putting his arm around Narcissa, his great voice softening.

"We can't know it," replied Narcissa, "but I believe he is our friend. Why not write to the Board yourself, telling what Mr. Pambrun has told us and offering refutation?"

"Very well," growled Marcus, "I'll do that. But as for sitting here calmly, while Spalding goes on writing slanderous letters, I'll not submit to it, Narcissa!"

"Well, at least, don't start off to-night! I've always heard it was bad luck to start on a journey on Friday. And, Marcus, how about our famous 'turn the other cheek' policy?"

Marcus suddenly gave one of his great roars of laughter. "Narcissa, I am clay in your hands!" He turned to the factor. "Pambrun, aren't we well mated—her ice and my fire?"

"Ice!" sniffed Pambrun. "Doctor, sometimes you are a fool!"

"Don't be too sure of that, my friend," grunted Marcus. Then he turned back to his wife. "To-morrow I'll start for the Clearwater."

Narcissa shook her head, but said no more. The men smoked in silence while she made up a bed of buffalo skins on the floor and beguiled the sleep-sodden young Sarah to undress and crawl into it. She then cleared the supper away before joining Marcus and their guest in front of the fire.

"Have you received letters from home yet, Madam Whitman?" asked the factor.

Narcissa shook her head slowly. "I've not heard from Angelica since I left there, a year and two months ago. I may not hear for another year, until the ship comes to Fort Vancouver from the Sandwich Islands. We didn't learn till we reached here, that letters could be sent to Montreal and brought through by one of your fur brigades in a few months' time. Our letters from home were to come by boat around Cape Horn to the American Board mission at the Sandwich Islands. That takes two years, of course. . . . I would give a year of my life to hear from mother. . . . To think that she knows nothing of Alice Clarissa!"

"It's hard," murmured the factor. "Letters are everything here. I mean, of course, letters from home. This place never can mean home to you."

"It's home to me!" declared Marcus stoutly, looking round him with an affectionate eye for every adobe brick, every piece of furniture, all wrought by his own patient hands. "But poor Narcissa's sick for her mother, I know. As soon as we get things settled here, say three or four years from now, she shall take Alice Clarissa back to visit her grandparents."

Narcissa shook her head doubtfully and silence fell, the vast, inescapable silence of the wilderness.

The factor returned to Walla Walla immediately after breakfast the following morning. Narcissa saw him go with a little sinking of the heart, for she knew that Marcus was only awaiting the factor's departure to make preparations for his own journey to Lap-wai. But fate was on Narcissa's side. Pambrun was not yet out of sight and Marcus had just started for the corral when Umtippe, followed by several braves, intercepted him. The doctor paused on the doorstep.

"What can I do for you, Umtippe?" he asked. "Narcissa, come here and help me understand him."

"Two days ago, at Fort Walla Walla," said the chief, "a King George man in a long black robe made strong spirit medicine over my nephew and gave his spirit to his God. The King George man said your spirit medicine was all bad and if the Cayuse used it, they would burn forever. You must not have the spirit meeting to-morrow or ever again on this land."

"The King George man is wrong," said Marcus. "My God is the only living God. He will make your bad hearts good."

"Our hearts are not bad!" snarled Umtippe. "Don't say that again! You hear me! You must not have your spirit meeting, to-morrow. I am going to have my braves sprinkled by the King George man. You'd better leave your papoose here and go away."

He turned on his moccasined heel and led his silent courtiers back to the Indian village. Marcus and Narcissa stared at each other.

"That, at least, settles my going away, for the time being," said the doctor. "Spalding's turn must come when it can. We'll hold that meeting to-morrow, come what may!"

Narcissa nodded and turned to the day's work. Umtippe did not make his usual visit to Alice Clarissa that morning,

observing which, several squaws, carrying papooses, edged into the cabin and watched the baby's bath, while old Tua explained to them volubly, as one having superior knowledge, that it would not kill the child, but kept it from growing dark like an Indian baby. Narcissa laughingly corrected the old lady and, having finished with Alice Clarissa, put her to sleep. Then she invited one of the mothers to allow her to borrow her baby, wash it and dress it in some of Alice Clarissa's clothes. Three babies were at once offered for the sacrifice, and Narcissa spent the remainder of the morning in a lesson to the squaws on the care and feeding of their children.

It was a lesson pitifully needed. It was the Indian custom to nurse their babies until they were two or three years of age, or until their little stomachs were stout enough to handle the camas and jerked meat that was the staple diet for adults. A surprising number of the women, Narcissa found, could not nurse their babies, and for these, death was inevitable, for their mothers had nothing to offer them save roots and meat. Milch cows had been unknown to the Cayuse until the coming of the whites. When Narcissa produced a nursing bottle which had been procured before Alice Clarissa arrived lest Narcissa be unable to nurse her, and having filled it with diluted cow's milk, attempted to feed one of the half-starved papooses, the squaw pushed the bottle away in horror and disgust.

Very patiently, Narcissa explained how she came to have the bottle, and how common its use was among white babies. Finally, she put a little sugar on the rubber nipple and put it in Alice Clarissa's mouth. That obliging infant, still asleep, took a lusty drink, the squaws hanging over her, breathless with interest, and at last, very fearfully, the squaw with the hungry baby allowed the bottle to be tried on her own child. After the first puzzled moment the little fellow drank greedily.

A great clamor broke forth from the squaws. Regardless of the demands of hygiene, Narcissa filled and refilled the bottle until every papoose had had a drink. Not until then would the squaws consent to leave. With old Tua's help, Narcissa finally shoved the last excited woman out. The old midwife paused in the door to say:

"The wife of the war chief had a baby yesterday. She has no milk for it, but Umtippe would rather it dies than drink from a cow."

Narcissa stared at the old woman thoughtfully. "Wait a moment, Tua," she said.

She filled a new bottle with very weak, sweetened milk and water, tucked her sleeping baby under her arm and said to Tua, "Show me the way to the lodge of the war chief's wife."

"I will point the lodge out to you," Tua nodded, "but I am afraid of Umtippe's anger if I lead you there."

Narcissa found the new mother in the delivery lodge, a small temporary shelter put up by the prospective mother for her use during labor. It was so low that Narcissa was obliged to enter on her knees. She found the woman lying on an old buffalo skin, an eighteen months' old baby strapped to its board beside her, and a little new-born child in her arms. She was weeping silently. Her braids had come undone and she was unspeakably dirty and woebegone.

"What is the trouble, Ti-wi?" asked Narcissa.

The woman did not reply, except to sob more heavily and to shove the older child toward the visitor. Narcissa gave one look at the little brown face on the board. It was emaciated almost beyond relief.

"Dead!" exclaimed Narcissa, her eyes filling with tears. "Did it starve, Ti-wi?"

With a despairing gesture, Ti-wi threw open her deerskin tunic and pointed to her sunken breasts. "I had no milk

for my first-born for months. I have none now and this second son will die!" Tears ran down her cheeks.

"Will you let me give him cow's milk, Ti-wi? Thus?" Narcissa produced the bottle and again demonstrated its usefulness on her own baby.

The squaw watched, aversion mingling with eagerness in her black eyes. Then she shook her head. "Umtippe would kill both me and my son."

"I'll be back again," said Narcissa. She scrambled out of the tent and made her way to Umtippe's lodge. He was crouched on the floor, smoking, and looked up at her with a frown. Narcissa gave her errand without preliminaries.

"Umtippe, your brother's new son will die for lack of milk, as the older child has, unless you let me give him cow's milk."

"No!" The old Cayuse spat on the ground to express his loathing.

"You don't understand. Look!" Once more, Alice Clarissa with a crow of delight took a drink from the proffered bottle. "When she is a little older," Narcissa said, "she will drink cow's milk every day. All white children do so. Thus all the King George men were fed. Dr. McLoughlin, the Kitchie Okema, owe their strength to the cow's milk they had all during childhood. So I can save your nephew for you."

"No!" grunted the chief; his eyes, nevertheless, as he gazed on the lusty white child, were uneasy.

"When you die," urged Narcissa, "God will ask you why you let your blood in the tribe die out. All your own sons are dead. He will say, 'You had a chance to save your brother's baby and were afraid to!' And God will hold that death against you."

"I am not afraid," retorted the chief. "It is against Indian custom. It's bad medicine. The squaw shall be killed for not having milk!"

"That's fool's talk!" Narcissa's voice was scornful. "Kill the mother and the baby will surely die. My husband saved your wife and he could have saved your brother. He says, thus a baby whose mother has no milk should be fed. God will hold that little boy's death against you and I could save him."

Umtippe stared up at her. She stood, tall and strong against the sky, in her indigo print dress, the lovely baby on one arm, her dignity as marked and as inscrutable as Umtippe's own.

"I shall give your nephew the bottle!" she said, suddenly, and turned back to the delivery lodge.

The old man scrambled to his feet and hurried after her. To her surprise, he did not try to detain her. She crawled into the lodge, brought out the dead baby and, without a word, laid it at the chief's feet. He stared down at the terrible little face in troubled silence, while Narcissa returned to the astounded mother.

"Let me show Umtippe your new son," she said.

The woman made no protest and Narcissa brought out the little thing, squirming and crying on its board, and thrust it into the chief's arms.

"The last of your blood," she said quietly. "He is a fine, strong child. He shall be brought by his mother every day to my cabin and play with the little White Cayuse. Look!"

She suddenly thrust the bottle into the Indian baby's mouth. For just a breath, he refused it, then as a drop of the sweetened liquid touched his tongue, he began to swallow hungrily. Umtippe groaned and lifted his hand, but Narcissa thrust it aside.

"This is a woman's job!" she exclaimed. "What can a man know of it! Go away! Go back to the men, or God will hold this baby's death against you."

"Don't say that again!" he commanded sharply.

Narcissa laid Alice Clarissa on the ground, took the Indian child and said:

"When he has finished this, I shall show his mother how to care for him. Every day she shall come to the cabin for his day's supply of milk. Tell her so, Umtippe."

For a long moment the old Cayuse watched his tiny nephew pull at the bottle, then he called to Ti-wi. "Do as the white squaw says."

He turned on his heel. But Narcissa put out a detaining hand. "If you try to stop our meetings, on Sunday and Tuesday, I shall refuse to give your nephew his milk."

Umtippe glared at her as if he would strike her. Narcissa returned his glare, with interest. The chief grunted and continued on his way. Narcissa, her heart beating high, carried the Indian boy in to his mother. The woman looked up at her, her eyes like a grateful dog's.

"Your God is good to babies," she said. "From now on I'll pray to Him."

Narcissa felt suddenly very weak. Here was the first convert for Waii-lat-pu! . . .

CHAPTER X

COURIER TO THE GOVERNOR

MARCUS' dinner was very late that day, but, listening to Narcissa's story, he quite forgot to eat, even when at last the meal was on the table.

"I have found my way to help, Marcus!" she ended. "You can't know what that means to me!"

"Why can't I?" exclaimed Marcus. "It's of extraordinary importance to all concerned. Thank God for it, I say! Thank God!" And he bowed his head to utter a grace that was almost a chant of thanksgiving.

Narcissa had, indeed, found a place for herself. From that day, her cabin became a mother's and baby's clinic and her every waking hour was filled with care. She had found, too, what was, at that moment, of supreme importance, a threat to hold over Umtippe's dangerous old head; but a threat that would be potent, she knew, only so long as his nephew was dependent on the bottle!

The usual church service was held on Sunday and on the Tuesday following, with scant attendance by any but squaws, to be sure, but it was not disturbed by any demonstration from Umtippe. And during the month following, most of the tribe dispersed for the summer buffalo hunting and salmon fishing, leaving only the old, the crippled and a few mothers, Ti-wi among them.

Marcus resolved, during this peaceful interlude, to make his deferred trip to Lap-wai. Narcissa made no effort to detain him. He was quite calm now and she did not greatly fear a serious rupture. She dreaded being left alone, with only her baby and Sarah Hall; but it was safe enough,

with the braves away on the hunt. So she saw Marcus depart with comparative equanimity.

Sarah Hall had adapted herself with surprising ease to life at the mission. She was picking up English and though she was a good deal of a spitfire, she was an affectionate little thing. As she ceased to suspect these new friends of evil intent toward her, she became extremely teachable and her devotion to Alice Clarissa was a very moving thing to watch. With Marcus, for many months, she remained a little uneasy, as if it would be long before she dared trust the male of the species, but within a week of her arrival her faith in Narcissa was complete.

Marcus had been gone nearly three weeks and Narcissa was looking for his return at any moment, when, riding like a whirlwind through the summer dust, a horseman galloped across the dooryard and dismounted before the steps. It was Miles Goodyear.

He pulled off his cap to Narcissa, with the Governor's best manner. "Good evening, Madam Whitman! A courier with letters from His Excellency!"—this with a broad grin that was unquenchably Miles' own.

Narcisssa held out both her hands. "Miles! Miles! How glad I am to see you! I thought you'd gone to Montreal."

"I did get as far as the Fraser River," replied Miles, "but I had to come back with letters. How's the doctor? I want to see that baby."

Narcissa led the way into the cabin and introduced him to Sarah Hall and to Alice Clarissa, in Sarah's arms. Miles gave Sarah a scant nod, but examined the baby gravely.

"She's like you, I'm glad to say," was his verdict. "For, while the doctor's a fine old boy, his good looks will never burden him."

"Nonsense, Miles!" exclaimed Narcissa. "The doctor's a fine looking man, only you're too young to appreciate his

kind. But, my dear boy, how much you've grown! You're taller than I."

Miles, who was standing on the hearth, his hands clasped behind him, teetered back and forth on his high-heeled riding boots, gave a self-conscious glance at the red coat he wore and grinned again.

Narcissa smiled in return. "Enjoying life, aren't you, my dear! Wouldn't you enjoy it more if we had supper now, instead of waiting for an hour, when it's due?"

"Be Gad, I would!" cried Miles. "Say, Mrs. Whitman, if I'd only had sense enough to get more education, I could a' worked up to be the Governor's secretary. Of course, I had to be such a doggone smart alec that I knew more'n anybody!" He sighed deeply over his own shortcomings, then grinned again. "But, on the other hand, if I'd a' stayed in school, I'd not met up with you missionaries and got in touch with Captain Thing. And I can keep on learning! Say, Mrs. Whitman, these Hudson's Bay factors are great readers! You'd be surprised at the number of books they have sent from England. Up in Rupert's Land, the Governor has started a kind of traveling library. And in the dead of winter up there, when the snow's so deep seems like even God's forgot 'em, he has these loads of books taken across country on dog carioles. They say you can't imagine the difference it makes in the wilderness."

"I can easily imagine it," said Narcissa quietly. She was frying antelope steaks over the fire, and now she said to the gaping Sarah, "Put baby in her cradle, Sarah, and set the table, please."

"Here, give me the baby!" cried Miles. "I had a baby sister. I can take as good care of her as you."

He took Alice Clarissa deftly and, without a touch of self-consciousness, began to walk up and down with her, laughing into the little rosy face, and now and again kissing her.

"She smells sweet, like a white child. Indian babies stink so! Say, Mrs. Whitman, what would you think if I went over to England for an education?"

Narcissa put the smoking supper on the table and took the baby from him, before she replied:

"I'd ask you why you preferred an English education to an American."

Miles scowled thoughtfully and ate a slice of bread before he attempted a reply. "You see, I'm so blamed ignorant, I can hardly find words to answer you. It looks like this to me. The British know more about governing than we do. Look at the way they handle these Indians and half-breeds in Oregon and the thousands of 'em, up in Rupert's Land. When the Governor will let me talk to him, I ask him questions and I asked him about that and he said it was a matter of education. So I thought, if I could get their kind of education, I could show us Americans how to govern our Indians, before we get through with settling out here. Why can't we learn to use them, the way my Company does, instead of fighting 'em?"

"Then you aren't thinking of turning British?" asked Narcissa.

Miles looked at her indignantly. "Say, Mrs. Whitman, I was born an American! I'd rather be an ignorant American like me, than the best educated Britisher like—" he paused.

"Like Governor Simpson?" queried Narcissa.

"Well, I wouldn't mind being him," said Miles, grudgingly. "He's something like I imagine a decent, plain kind of a king would be. He likes to put on lots of style, you know, and he's very dignified, and yet I've noticed that anybody, at all, can talk to him if they've got a trouble. The dirtiest, lousiest old Indian has just as good a chance to ask justice of him as a clerk or a chief trader. And he's always thinking about the good of the folks that work for

the Company. Wants 'em to be so happy that they'll work like hell—excuse me, Mrs. Whitman,—for the Company. And who says that isn't wisdom?"

"Is he well liked?" Narcissa refilled Sarah Hall's cup with milk and motioned for her to stop staring at their visitor and go on eating.

"They say Dr. McLoughlin don't like him. But I guess that's just one big man's envy of another. Big chiefs are bound to fight. All the men that're in the Governor's canoe brigade would die for him gladly. John Leslie says 'he's really a great man, you know,' and he puts him next to the Queen. I'd do anything for him, myself. Like? It's more'n liking. Say, Mrs. Whitman, what do you think he did after you left Fort Hall?"

"Made plots to get rid of us missionaries," replied Narcissa promptly, "none of which worked."

Miles chuckled. "Give the old boy time! You see, he doesn't know missionaries the way Dr. McLoughlin does, so his first attempts were bound to fail. Jokes aside, I think he's resigned to you folks now."

It was Narcissa's turn to chuckle, but enigmatically. "What did the Kitchie Okema do at Fort Hall, Miles?"

"Well, the day after you left, he got an Indian to take him and me up to Jo Buffalo's camp. It was twelve hours' hard riding among those hills to the south. The camp was quite a big one; there must have been fifty braves sitting round a council fire with Jo haranguing them, when we got there. The Governor made us stay way back in the trees and ordered us not to interfere, then he walked, by himself and unarmed, right up to the council fire. He told Jo Buffalo in a loud voice what white men did to men who attacked their women and that he'd got a bad idea in his head when he told you that he'd be glad to have you harmed. Then he called the Indian that was our guide and made him interpret what he'd said to the other Indians.

Then he took the gun our Indian was carrying, shot Jo Buffalo through the heart, dropped the gun to the ground and walked slowly back to his horse I was holding. He wouldn't let us hurry getting away, either. We just went at a jog-trot. Be Gad, I thought every twig snapping was an arrow in my back!"

Miles paused, well pleased with the expression of surprise and horror on Narcissa's face.

"I didn't dare ask him any questions," Miles went on, "but he said to me, 'The idea must not get abroad among the Indians that anything but death can be meted to a man who tried what Jo Buffalo tried. He told Madam Whitman that the Kitchie Okema wouldn't care. Only Kitchie Okema could remove that impression!' Say, Mrs. Whitman, Jo Buffalo's death ought to be talked about to these Cayuse. Is the doctor still talking gentle to 'em?"

Narcissa did not reply. She laid the sleeping baby in the cradle. When she was seated again at the table, Miles burst forth:

"You can tell the doctor, when you tell him about Jo Buffalo, that I and a lot of other men consider that the Governor did the doctor's job for him."

"What job was that, Miles?" boomed a great voice from the doorway.

"Oh, Marcus!" cried Narcissa, running to throw her arms about him and kiss his cheek, rough with a week's beard. "Safe at home again! Thank God!"

Marcus gave her a bear hug, tweaked the smiling Sarah's hair, and kissed the sleeping baby, then held out his hand to Miles.

"Well, young man, what sort of a uniform is that you're wearing?"

Miles looked a bit sheepish, but answered proudly enough, "I'm Governor Simpson's courier."

The two, young man and older, looked each other over.

They were curiously alike in their hawklike New England cast of countenance, curiously unlike in general appearance. Marcus was slovenly in dress, and had a certain carelessness of attitude that contrasted strongly with Miles' new dandihood and alert posture.

"And what was that job, Miles?" asked the doctor, sitting down before the fresh plate Narcissa placed for him.

Miles flushed, but stoutly repeated the story he had just told Narcissa, even to the last sentence that Marcus had overheard. Marcus devoured his supper during the recital, looking up only when the young courier had finished.

"Could I have hoped to teach these Cayuse the doctrines of Jesus Christ if I had come here with the blood of an Indian on my hands?" he asked, angrily.

"You can't teach 'em anything if they think you're a coward," declared Miles bluntly.

"Do people think I'm a coward?" cried the doctor.

"Some whites do, and they say all the Indians do," answered Miles. "Of course, I myself know you aren't. And I tell 'em so. All they answer is to grin and say 'Jo Buffalo.'"

"I don't like that at all!" Marcus pushed his plate from him and looked at Narcissa. "Do you think I should have shot that Indian?" he asked her.

"It was I who told you to apply our accepted Indian policy to him," answered Narcissa.

"That doesn't answer my question," insisted Marcus. "Let me put it another way. Have you regretted since, that I didn't kill him?"

"I never went that far," replied Narcissa, "though before baby came, in my weakness and fear the thought of Jo Buffalo's turning up here was my most constant horror. But that passed when I received my strength."

"That's what I can't understand," Miles burst forth,

"and none of the other men can. How can you bring a white woman into this country and ever leave her alone! Yet, not knowing that Jo Buffalo was dead, you can go off and leave Mrs. Whitman for three weeks! I don't see how! And yet, you are a man, every inch of you."

"If you were a Christian, Miles, you'd understand," said Narcissa. "The doctor believes that we are in God's hands, and that His will is going to prevail, regardless of our own puny acts. Personally, I consider my husband's loyalty to his faith and his teachings the very noblest type of bravery. To do the thing he believes right, in the face of the sneers of all his contemporaries, is a sublime sort of courage. I wish I possessed it."

Marcus' eyes softened. "Thank you, my dear wife," he said. "Let the rest of the tongues wag! I don't care!" He turned, after a moment, to Miles. "Well, what's the news from the great world, Miles?"

Miles, who had been regretting his own temerity, was glad to change the subject. "You've got a rival in your profession, doctor. Some fellow named Dr. Elijah White turned up at the Methodist mission, this spring, and they say Jason Lee is kind of embarrassed, what to do with him. His morals are about like those of the rapscallions Jason's trying to save, and with old Doc White running round loose, things are more confused than ever. Also, they say he wrote back by Slacum for the Methodist conference to choose him and his buddy, Shepherd, each a strong, likely wife and send 'em by ship."

"Well! Well! What will the Hudson's Bay Company do about those white women?" cried Marcus.

"They aren't worrying much about the Methodist mission. In the first place, it's south of the Columbia and in the second, Jason Lee does just about what Dr. McLoughlin tells him to." Miles spoke with as much authority as if all the policies of the Company were at his finger

tips. "Say, Mrs. Whitman, you never did answer my question about going to school in England."

"I think you lack everything that would make such a venture profitable to you, Miles," said Narcissa.

"Ouch!" grunted Miles. "Well, that settles that!"

Narcissa patted his arm. "I know you didn't really want to go, Miles." Then she looked at him, wistfully. "You spoke of letters when you came. Were you joking? Is there any chance that you have letters from home for me?"

"Not from home, Mrs. Whitman, I'm sorry to say," admitted Miles. "It's a letter from Governor Simpson."

He drew the missive, in its oilskin folder, from his pocket and handed it to Narcissa. She stared at it and looked up at the men, to say, with quivering lips, "It's kind of him to write me, but what would I not give if that were my mother's hand!"

"You might tell him so," suggested Marcus, drily.

Narcissa gave him a quick look. "I wouldn't mind telling him in the least," she said. Then, turning to Miles, "If you really want an education, Miles, why not plan to go to Harvard College? If you will come to Waii-lat-pu, as the doctor's assistant, I will teach you all I know. That, followed by a year with a special teacher in Boston, would prepare you. And you can earn all of it yourself."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Whitman," replied Miles. "That wouldn't give me what I want. I'd better stay where I am, than waste time that way. Going to Harvard wouldn't teach me how to handle Rupert's Land, or California Alta. Maybe I can pick it up from the Governor."

"No, you can't, Miles!" Narcissa spoke thoughtfully. "It took generations to produce the Governors of the Hudson's Bay Company. And while they were growing up, they had all their country's centuries of experience to draw on. We Americans refuse to profit by any one's experience. We must hack out a new way in our own way."

"Don't discourage the boy!" protested Marcus. "What does Simpson advise you to do, Miles?"

"He doesn't advise me. He orders me to do things and I do 'em, you bet, on the run."

"Why do you suppose he took you away from Captain Thing, Miles?" asked Marcus. "Why did he want to be bothered with a young cub like you?"

"Well," returned Miles, not at all offended, "I think he decided he didn't know much about Americans and he would learn something about 'em from me. Besides, he had a better chance to keep in touch with what Americans are doing with me as a messenger than using a half-breed or a Britisher."

"It puts you sort of in the position of a spy, doesn't it, Miles?" said Marcus.

"It might," agreed Miles, "if I wasn't just as fixed on making Oregon American as he is on making it British. He doesn't realize that."

"Don't be sure that he doesn't realize all that you are or can be made," said Narcissa, slowly breaking the seal on the letter and beginning, at once, to read it aloud.

"In Camp on Fraser River,
May 6, 1837.

To Madam Marcus Whitman,
Waii-lat-pu Mission,
Oregon Territory.

My Dear Madam:

Young Goodyear is returning to Fort Vancouver with dispatches, and I am, therefore, embracing the opportunity to send you and the good doctor my greetings and thanks for your kindness to the wee Sarah Hall. I am sending to you, by the next fur brigade, a copy of Scott's poems. It is not great verse, but Sir Walter has the gift of song.

Surely no poetry ever invited itself more urgently to be read aloud. Young Goodyear is a lad of parts. I am seriously considering taking him to England with me for a few years' training. It would be well for our two nations to have better understanding of each other. My experience of the past year convinces me that had we known each other better, had we been less insular, both, there never need have been that greatest calamity to the world, the American revolution. For look you, madam, when foreigners like Napoleon can run mad through Europe and but for England's fighting will and power, destroy the peace of the world, it behooves all people of British descent to think of their heritage and responsibility. Unless Britain remains strong, the continent will not cease to welter with the crimes of ambitious kings. The time will come when Britain's hands will have to be upheld by all the sons and daughters she has sent out to colonize the world, or chaos will reduce Europe to savagery. McLoughlin's Napoleon taught us this.

Think on it, my good missionaries, while preoccupied by teaching the hopeless Indian what he is unfitted to accept. Lift your eyes from the Columbia to sweep the world.

My candle has warned me that it is about to expire. A loon, that bird of terrible loneliness, has just called from the forest, to remind me that, after all, I am only a humble subject of a great sovereign, seeking to thrust the outpost of civilization a little further west.

I am, dear Madam Whitman, with kind remembrances to your husband,

Your ob'd't serv't,

George Simpson.

From Hon. George Simpson, Governor of Rupert's Land, etc., etc."

Narcissa laid the letter back in its wrapper and for a moment no one spoke. It was Marcus who broke the silence.

"What Simpson asks for," he said, "only he'd never admit it, is a world that lives up to the tenets of Christianity."

Narcissa made no reply. She began to wash the supper dishes for Sarah to dry, her mind filled with a restlessness, an acute uneasiness, that she made no effort to put into words.

Miles whistled "Malbrouck has gone a-fighting," under his breath, then said abruptly:

"How are the Spaldings, Doctor?"

"When I reached there both of them were at death's door with dysentery," replied Marcus grimly. "I have spent three weeks wrestling with Brother Grim for their lives. I left them both in a fair way to recovery. Of course," answering the question in Narcissa's eyes, "I couldn't, under the circumstances, mention my errand. The Lord had made it clear enough that He'd attend to that in His own good time."

"I'd just as soon nurse an old tomcat through a spell of sickness as Spalding," said Miles. "Say, Doctor, are you ever going back for that wagon?"

"I certainly am!" answered Marcus.

"I'll give you a lift, if I'm not in England," said Miles in a condescending voice that caused both Marcus and Narcissa to burst into laughter, much to Miles' bewilderment.

Following this, Sarah Hall spoke for the only time that evening.

"I think white boys are ver' silly," she said, and she put up the last tin cup and went to bed.

The others were not long in following her.

Miles continued his journey to Fort Vancouver, the next

day, and Waii-lat-pu settled to several uneventful weeks. Marcus made a number of short excursions to the buffalo camps of the Cayuse and endeavored to hold short services in their lodges. The Indians made no protests, but they treated his efforts to convert them with an amused contempt that was harder to combat than anger. Narcissa would have been glad to go with him on these journeys, but the doctor, for the sake of their nursing baby, would not permit it during the hot months. So Narcissa gave her summer to perfecting the Cayuse grammar and to tutoring Sarah Hall, who, before the summer was over, acquired an excellent command of English and had learned to read and write simple words.

Narcissa's uneasiness increased as the quiet days went on. She could not understand what the attitude of the Hudson's Bay Company meant. Waii-lat-pu, except for purely social visits from the Pambruns, was being left severely alone. Narcissa, after the very active opposition to the arrival of the missionaries in Oregon, could not see why they were being permitted to make all this elaborate preparation for a permanent establishment on the Walla Walla. Marcus was very sure that the Company had given up opposing them. Narcissa knew that Simpson merely had given up the puerile methods he had used at the beginning.

It was only after a month of thought and of discussion with Marcus that Narcissa made a reply to Simpson's letter.

"Waii-lat-pu Mission,
Oregon Territory,
June 30, 1837.

Hon. Geo. Simpson,
Governor of Rupert's Land.

My Dear Governor:

Your letter reached me by hand of Miles Goodyear. It found us well and our work progressing. Not, I will

admit, that the Cayuse have shown desire to embrace Christianity, but they permit the doctor to attend them when they are ill and I am teaching the mothers, with some hope of success, how to care for their infants.

Your statements with regard to European peace and the responsibility of the English-speaking race for maintaining it, I agree with quite fully. But, Governor, permit me to ask you if you wished to imply that a monopoly by the Hudson's Bay Company of Oregon territory would help England to suppress any new Napoleons who may arise? Will permitting the Oregon Indians to remain in the outer darkness of heathendom cause Christianity to wax stronger in the hearts of ambitious European rulers?

Sarah Hall is an exceptionally intelligent young girl. She is impulsive, has a good sense of humor, deep affections and a very lively jealousy. I love her much and she seems to return my feeling, although her first love is our baby, Alice Clarissa.

Miles Goodyear is well worth a fine training, but I doubt if you will find his Yankee spirit adaptable to British uses. Although, indeed, your influence over him shows only the most delightful results.

These things are difficult for me to express in words. I could wish that you were here with us, this lovely June afternoon, with the enchanting shadow of Mount Hood on the sky and the smell of young wheat in the air. I might find it easier, then, to make you understand how immovably I am convinced that my place is here. The conviction seems to be undisturbed by my growing knowledge that, except for isolated cases, we are doomed to failure with these Indians; that I, myself, am not an adequate missionary, that my days are, perhaps, set to a tragic key, and that my husband has no opportunity here to grow to the great stature for which he was designed. Here we are, God help us! Here we shall stay till our work (and I do

not as yet see clearly what that work will be) is finished.

Thank you for your many thoughts of us.

I am, dear Governor, very gratefully your friend,

NARCISSA PRENTISS WHITMAN."

Marcus read the letter through, folded it and sealed it for Narcissa before he said, slowly:

"It breaks my heart to have you look this way at our work."

"Would you prefer that I leave that out of my letter?" asked Narcissa quickly. "I will do so if you wish me to. But, Marcus, I want him to understand that we are to be neither bought nor beguiled. And only the truth can convince him."

Marcus stared out the open door for a long time before he replied, "I'm too simple, I guess, to understand all you're driving at. Go ahead and manage your own way."

CHAPTER XI

THE WATCH-DOG OF THE COLUMBIA

WHEN, in late summer, the Indians returned to their village and Narcissa opened her school, she daily expected a visit from Père Demers, protesting against its opening, for they knew that he was very active among the Indians who hung around Fort Walla Walla. He had told the Walla Wallapoos, flatly, to keep away from Waii-lat-pu and had succeeded in baptizing two young children of a Walla Wallapoos chief. But the priest did not come near them.

They heard, late in the fall, that a ship had come, bringing wives for the Methodist missionaries. Narcissa sent off a letter of welcome to them and longed unspeakably to know them. She was sick for the sight of a woman of her own color. But the Willamette was far away and the ways of the Methodists entirely opposed to all the ways of the missions at Waii-lat-pu and Lap-wai. It was to be long before Narcissa was to know any of the newcomers.

In November, the Spaldings sent for Marcus. Eliza Spalding's accouchement was at hand. Narcissa sent Sarah Hall to stay with the Pambruns and, with Charley Compo on guard at Waii-lat-pu, accompanied Marcus on his visit. She had long since exacted a promise from the doctor that he would not bring up the matter of the clergyman's letter to the American Board until they had heard from William Gray. So she found herself actually looking forward to the visit.

The weather was very bad, with snows and rains, swollen streams, and sometimes fireless camps. But Alice Clarissa,

riding in her father's arms, crowed and laughed, and Narcissa returned to trail life with zest. Mrs. Spalding came safely out of the valley of death, with a little daughter, and her husband, strangely meek and kindly of speech under the influence of Eliza's suffering, baptized both his own child and Alice Clarissa in a ceremony of fervid beauty.

Spalding had made less headway with his mission farm than had the doctor with his. He preached, however, to larger congregations, had baptized many children and claimed to have several adult converts. Eliza Spalding had a large class of girls to whom she was teaching weaving. Narcissa, trying to compare the two missions with an impartial eye, could not feel that Henry's conviction of superiority was based on fact.

The visit did her good. She returned to Waii-lat-pu, refreshed in body and mind, and took up her schoolwork with renewed interest.

During the winter months Narcissa made real progress in teaching the women and children. But the braves, with almost no exception, refused to be taught anything by the white squaw. Marcus, on the other hand, to his great delight, succeeded in persuading a number of the men to plant wheat and potatoes. Or rather, the men plowed nearly fifty acres and left the planting to their squaws. They were so greedy for bread, which they had tasted for the first time, when it came from the Whitmans' oven, that they were willing to permit their squaws to work for its production!

It was fortunate for Narcissa that her work was, during the day at least, engrossing, for during the winter not a white visitor came to them, nor did they receive messages from any. Miles, Pierre Pambrun, Governor Simpson, Dr. McLoughlin, seemingly had forgotten their existence.

Narcissa finished the seventy-five page Cayuse-Nez Percé

grammar which was sent to the Sandwich Islands, where the American Board Mission was in possession of a printing press. The greater part of her evenings, she gave to teaching Sarah Hall, but she was much hampered by her lack of textbooks. This was particularly trying when she undertook to teach Sarah the rudiments of geography. Nothing daunted, however, she asked Marcus to borrow for her from Pambrun, a Hudson's Bay Company's map of Oregon territory.

"I'll keep it, tell him, only long enough to copy it," she added, as Marcus spoke of the great value of the article she wished to borrow.

The map turned out to be an exceptionally interesting one, for it showed not only the Company's forts in Oregon, but also the whole course of the Columbia River, and the Pacific Coast, from San Francisco to Sitka in Russian-owned Alaska, as well as all the Spanish-Mexican territory.

Narcissa sacrificed a fine linen nightgown, the only one she had not used in preparing Alice Clarissa's layette, to the cause of teaching. She cut a strip a yard square from its ample breadths and mounted it on a beautifully tanned deerskin. Upon this, she painstakingly copied the map she had borrowed. When it was finished, she fastened it to the adobe wall near the fireplace and Sarah Hall had her first lesson in geography.

One cold afternoon in early spring, not long after the map was completed, a little cavalcade of horses drew up in the dooryard of the mission. The leader dismounted and entered the cabin where the Whitmans were at their early supper. He pulled off a beaver cap, disclosing a thin, tanned face, with a long nose, close-set blue eyes, and an aggressive chin: a small man, obliged to look up to meet the doctor's clear gaze as the latter shook hands with him.

"I'm Ermatinger, of the H.B.C. Some say that means

Hudson's Bay Company; others, 'Here Before Christ.' Anyhow, I guess you've heard of me, and I've heard of you a many a time." He turned from Marcus to Narcissa. "Madam Whitman, your golden braids have been the brightest spot in Oregon ever since you crossed the Blue Mountains."

Narcissa replied laughingly, "We've long been hearing that Chief Trader Ermatinger was the courtier of the Columbia. Now, I know that they weren't flattering you! Lay off your cloak, Mr. Ermatinger, and have supper with us. Is there any one with you whom you'd wish to ask in?"

The trader shook his head. "Just Indians. They'll set up my lodge by the corral and feed themselves." He tossed his gray riding cloak to a chair, disclosing a well-knit figure in blue broadcloth, the coat trimmed with brass buttons. He did not wear ruffles, however, as did the chief factors. His was a plain red flannel shirt with a red kerchief knotted stock fashion around his throat. High leather riding boots completed his costume.

"I've been wanting to get here, a long time," he went on. "Almost came up with Bill Gray when he came over here, but I couldn't spare the time."

"Where did you leave Gray?" asked Marcus.

"About two days' ride this side of Council Bluffs. He and my boy went on from there."

"Did you have much trouble getting through?" Marcus filled the guest's tin plate, while Narcissa made him a fresh cup of tea.

"No, everything went well," replied the trader, his mouth full of buffalo stew. "We traveled with the Flathead tribe after we left Cœur d'Alène Lake. The Flatheads had a mixup with some Blackfeet soon after we got started. We killed and scalped twenty of the scurvy Blackfeet. Most treacherous Indians I know, outside the Cayuse. I guess

that's about all that happened. Oh, yes, at Ash Hollow, three hundred Sioux attacked us! They had a French trader with them and after we'd fought for a while, the Frenchman arranged for a parley with us. Gray and I, with two or three Flatheads, went out to pow-wow with them. And do you know, that scurvy Frenchman had the Sioux who were with him shoot our Flathead guard and then he told us we were his prisoners. We mixed up with him a little, after that, but that's all."

"But what happened?" cried Narcissa, as Ermatinger became engrossed in his food.

"Why, let's see, as I recall, Gray and I both fired and Gray had his horse shot from under him and a couple of slight scalp wounds. I got wounded in the arm. Fifteen Sioux and the Frenchman were killed. After that, we smoked the peace pipe and all was well. That boy, Bill Gray, has the makings of a frontiersman in him. The only thing that kept him from taking that Frenchman's scalp back to the United States with him was the fact that he was afraid the American Board might not understand."

The trader roared with laughter and after a moment's hesitation, Marcus joined him, and Narcissa could not suppress a smile.

"Well," said Ermatinger, after he'd wiped his eyes on the tail of his neckerchief, and had looked around the cabin, "you're cozy enough here. But how can you make room for the four new pupils the Governor says you're to take?"

"What's that?" asked Marcus sharply.

"The Governor says four half-breed children must be put into your hands for education," replied the trader coolly. "They are the children of certain Scotch factors. These are to be followed by the daughters of Dr. McLoughlin and Pierre Pambrun, who are to be taught music and deportment."

"There's some mistake, Ermatinger," said Marcus bruskly. "We are not employees of the Hudson's Bay Company."

"More than that," added Narcissa. "It's absurd to ask us to take more pupils in our crowded quarters."

"You live too plain," remarked Ermatinger. "You can't impress Indians any way except by putting on style. Live high! Show 'em that civilization pays. I don't see what you got here that would make them want to turn Christian."

"Wait a moment!" exclaimed Marcus. "Don't try to change the subject, Ermatinger. We are not a public school. And my wife isn't out here to teach anybody but Indians."

"Is that the answer I'm to send the Governor?" demanded Ermatinger.

"No!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Please, Marcus, let's not be brusk. Will you not tell Governor Simpson, Mr. Ermatinger, that we are making adobe bricks, now, for a new house. When the house is finished, we shall be glad to do what we can to accommodate him."

The chief trader looked from Marcus, in his slovenly, buckskin clothing, to Narcissa in her trim blue calico. Then he said, with a chuckle:

"Doc, you'd better let the missis do the talking while you do the physicking. Madam Whitman, I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll sing to me, like I've heard so much about, I'll promise to hold the Governor off till you get your house built."

Marcus laughed ruefully, but said nothing more. Narcissa began to clear the table. "That's a bargain, Mr. Ermatinger! But you must let me clear off the supper first."

The trader nodded and strolled over to look at the map on which fell the rays of the setting sun.

"What do you use this for?" he asked, his voice suddenly harsh with suspicion.

"I teach Sarah Hall geography from it," replied Narcissa. "It's one I copied from a map we borrowed from Mr. Pambrun."

"I don't see what missionaries need of maps," grunted the trader.

"'A cat may look at a king,'" said Narcissa, with a little smile.

Something in her casual manner infuriated Ermatinger. "But I mean it!" he shouted. "You have no right to have a map of English possessions posted here. Every time you look at it, it goads you to action."

Marcus, standing before the fire, stared at the trader as though he could not believe his ears. Then he laughed. "Oh, I forgot! A good watch-dog barks at everything he sees or hears, just to be sure he'll not miss anything!"

Ermatinger recovered himself. "I guess you're right, Doc! All the same, I advise you to take that map down before Dr. McLoughlin comes through, next week."

"Dr. McLoughlin!" exclaimed Narcissa and Marcus together.

The chief trader nodded. "Yes, he's going to England on business and we'll be in the Black Douglas' hands for a year."

"I feel like a child whose mother is going on a visit—as if anything might go wrong!" cried Narcissa.

"So we'll all feel, till he gets back," agreed Ermatinger.

"What's he going for?" asked the doctor.

Ermatinger shrugged his shoulders, then he looked thoughtfully at the fire. Would it not be wise to impress these Americans with a hint of the purposes of the Hudson's Bay Company? The chief trader was by no means in the confidence of Dr. McLoughlin. But he was an acute observer and filled with fighting loyalty to the White

Headed Eagle, as Dr. McLoughlin was known to the Cayuse.

"A while ago, a Hudson's Bay trader was going along the coast, below Sitka, looking for seal, and the Russians and the Russian American Company, which really is the Czar, fired a cannon shot or two at him and drove him back to Fort Vancouver. We can't have that kind of treatment. The Russians have got to learn that a man with H.B.C. on his canoe pennant can't be handled like an Indian. The Russians can practise their hellish cruelty on the natives, but not on a Britisher. So Dr. McLoughlin goes to London, to have the Russians driven back to their kennels in St. Petersburg."

Narcissa looked at the map. "In other words, England is going to try to secure the Pacific coast, even up to Arctic regions," she said softly.

Frank Ermatinger bit slowly into a plug of tobacco. "The Hudson's Bay Company," he said, somewhat indistinctly, "is going to maintain discipline in its territory, if it has to talk with British guns."

"Russia claims all that strip of coast," said Marcus, running his finger along the map, "from Sitka down to Fort Vancouver. I hope she can't keep it, for she's a cruel nation. At the same time, I don't see what right England has to it. Why isn't it America's?"

"Why isn't it America's?" shouted the chief trader. "Why should it be? What has the United States done to earn it? What company have you to compare with the H.B.C.? For nearly two hundred years, we've poured out our blood and our money to penetrate this wilderness and make peaceful use of its natural products. By what right do you or Russia think you can come in and build on the foundations we've laid? What part of your religion teaches you that? Hey? By God, all that England has, she's paid for with blood!"

"A good deal of it's other nations' blood, isn't it?" suggested Narcissa mildly.

"Only when they interfere with our peaceful trading, like this dirty Russian firing on Peter Skeen Ogden," retorted Ermatinger. "Come, Madam Whitman, sing us a song. I hate to feel riled, as you Yankees say, when I'd been looking for a pleasant time."

So Narcissa, much amused by the little man's peremptory manner and not a little interested in his news of Dr. McLoughlin, sang for him, until he left, reluctantly, for his lodge.

She saw him only for a moment the next morning, when he came to say good-by to her. He was fresh-shaven and carefully brushed, a gallant figure as he bowed over her hand.

"I can tell Dr. McLoughlin he will be welcome, then?" he asked.

"Very, very welcome!" exclaimed Narcissa. "And so will you be, Mr. Ermatinger, whenever you care to come."

"I heard the other day," said the chief trader, "of a Flathead squaw who came a hundred and fifty miles, with her papoose, to hear you sing your baby to sleep. I know exactly how that squaw felt, Madam Whitman."

Sudden tears flushed to Narcissa's eyes. "They did not tell me that," she said. "I'm glad to know it."

"You are wasting a very great gift, Madam Whitman," exclaimed Ermatinger, turning abruptly to mount his horse.

With a sigh, Narcissa took up the day's ugly routine of louse-ridden babies and dirt-encrusted squaws.

Both Narcissa and Marcus were delighted by the prospect of a visit from the Chief Factor. Marcus decided to put all else aside and finish an adobe lean-to he had begun weeks before. Into this Narcissa and the two children could be moved for sleeping, leaving the bunks in the main cabin to Marcus and the visitor. Narcissa cleaned and delved,

taught and sang, and almost wore herself and Sarah Hall out. But by the night Dr. McLoughlin was expected, the lean-to was finished and furbished, the larder was stocked with the best products of Narcissa's skill, and Marcus and Narcissa, tired to the bone, were prepared to forget their weariness in the joy of this opportunity to make some slight return for the Chief Factor's great hospitality to them.

It was dusk when an Indian appeared at the door with a hurried line from Pierre Pambrun. Dr. McLoughlin was delayed, would not be able to visit Waii-lat-pu and would expect the Whitmans to meet him at Fort Walla Walla the following evening. They were grievously disappointed, but began at once to make preparations for the trip.

Long before dawn, Marcus was out attending to his chores and Narcissa was packing the saddle-bags and parfleches. There was a cold rain falling, but Narcissa wrapped the hardy baby in a tarpaulin and the start was made. Alice Clarissa rode in her father's arms; Narcissa and Sarah Hall, each on an unwilling Indian pony, followed. But the storm did not abate with the rising sun. Instead, the wind rose to a fearful gale, the rain turned to a ferociously driven sleet that blistered the cheeks and bruised the eyes. The cold became intense. For several miles Narcissa urged her horse after Marcus, realizing more clearly, moment by moment, that it was wrong to risk the baby's health in the twenty miles of blizzard ahead of them. At last, she rode forward and stopped Marcus, holding out her arms for Alice Clarissa.

"Go on, Marcus! Give him the letters for the mail!" she shouted above the howl of the wind.

"I wish you could take my place!" cried the doctor. "Having a talk with him means more to you than it does to me."

In her disappointment, Narcissa could have wept. But

she managed a smile, from under her frozen hood and, holding the crying baby in her strong clasp, she turned back to the mission. It was well she did so, for, as it afterward developed, Marcus got through, only at the risk of his life. His horse gave out and he made the last five miles of the trip staggering on foot. And even Marcus had only a few words with Dr. McLoughlin, who, delayed by the storm, stopped scarcely an hour at the fort.

Narcissa had a bad day in the cabin. All the homesickness, all the bitterness of disillusion which she had fought for the many months, caught her in the moment of acute disappointment over her thwarted plans and had their way with her. She left the baby with Sarah Hall, shut herself into the lean-to and for more hours than she cared to count, she paced the floor, fighting a nostalgia that was like a physical illness, for it burned her cheeks with fever, parched her lips and forced her to clutch her breast with the pain of her thudding heart. She could not pray. But, as the brief day settled into tempest-racked night, the sound of Alice Clarissa's wailing penetrated her misery. She bathed her face, brushed her hair and returned to her neglected duties.

Marcus returned in three days' time, rather the worse for frost bite, but otherwise cheerful and full of the surmises of various persons at Fort Walla Walla as to the probable purpose of Dr. McLoughlin's visit to England. Nor was he apologetic about his curiosity. In the isolation of Oregon, even the most ordinary man's doings were commented upon and mulled over until they were threadbare. How much more interesting, then, and subject to inspection, were the actions of this unacclaimed Lord of the Columbia! Marcus was unabashed in the telling of his bits of gossip, and so was Narcissa in the listening.

There was stored at Fort Vancouver, he had heard, about four years' surplus of wheat. This, the Chief Factor had

each year been planning to use in trade with the Russians at Sitka, who brought all their bread round the world by sledge and ship. But the unfortunate treatment accorded Peter Skeen Ogden had put a stop to all trade opportunities, while England and Russia discussed the episode. Perhaps the doctor was going to England to try to force a settlement of the matter. On the other hand, it was said that Dr. McLoughlin had roused very serious anger on the part of the Hudson's Bay Directors in London, because of his kindness to American missionaries. It was rumored that Governor Simpson had asked that he be called to England to receive a severer reprimand than he himself cared to administer.

Marcus had, too, many details to report of the pomp with which the Chief Factor traveled and of the reported plans for his entertainment along the way. The White Headed Eagle was a great man, in his own country of Oregon.

For many days, the Whitmans discussed Marcus' items of gossip and for many days Narcissa lived in daily expectation of something happening. It seemed impossible that the something portentous she felt brooding over the monotony of her days should not develop into an event that would rock the mission.

Of this sense, Narcissa attempted several times to speak to Marcus, but he only stared at her, in troubled wonder, and she soon desisted. There were no subtleties in Marcus' forthright nature. With one exception, all that he was and desired to be or have could be learned in a half hour's intercourse with him. This exception was his growing conviction that Narcissa's devoted affection would never grow to love for him. And after he discovered that mention of this conviction was extraordinarily painful to Narcissa, he placed an embargo on his tongue. This was his only inhibition.

Yet their isolation was so great, their dependence on each other so unescapable, that this failure of the glory of marriage for them was never out of the consciousness of either. In every glance of Marcus' keen eyes, Narcissa read reproach. And in every exhibition of self-control on Narcissa's part, Marcus saw a coldness of nature. Yet neither spoke.

In the middle of April came an interlude to the monotony. On a Saturday evening, some one knocked at the door of the cabin. Narcissa and Marcus stood in astonishment as a man six feet, four inches tall appeared when the doctor swung the door wide. He was smooth shaven, clad in black, with eyes of blue so large, so benign, that inadvertently Narcissa thought of the eyes of Christ, as the old masters had loved to portray them.

"I am Jason Lee, from the Methodist mission on the Willamette," he said, holding out his hand.

"Well! Well! This is a treat!" cried Marcus, clasping the proffered hand and leading Lee up to Narcissa. "Narcissa, this is the way a missionary ought to look!"

Narcissa joined the men in laughter and the three settled at once to a conversation that had the aspect of old friendship. Lee explained that he was on his way to the States for help for his mission and after a glance at the map on the wall:

"For other reasons, also," he added.

"What sort of a report had Slacum?" asked Narcissa quickly. "Do you think he got through with it?"

"Certainly, he did," replied Lee, "and with it a petition from me that Congress provide some sort of civil control here, for Americans. It's intolerable that we should be dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company as we are."

"We thought you belonged to Dr. McLoughlin, hair, hide and boots," blurted Marcus.

The clergyman flushed. "Many people think that, I'm

afraid. McLoughlin is the wisest man I know. More than that, he is the only figure standing for law and order in this country. I have cooperated with him in every possible way, excepting one. I want this country of the Columbia to be American and not British."

"Are you going to do anything active about that?" asked Narcissa eagerly.

"I shall tell every audience that comes to hear of the needs and work of the Methodist mission about the wonders of Oregon," replied Lee, "and I shall go to Washington and talk to such Congressmen as will listen to me. But their indifference is astonishing."

"What can we do? How can we help?" Narcissa leaned forward, her face vivid with interest.

"Bring Americans to the Columbia. In the end it may be preponderance of population belonging to one country or another that will settle this matter."

"Oh, it's not as simple as that, is it?" asked Narcissa. "There are politics within politics, not only in Washington but in London. Some people are willing to give up any claims to this section, I've heard, for a greater share of Mexico, if England will blink at it. And as soon as you talk about annexing more southern territory, that terrible slave extension question looms."

"I know!" Lee nodded, "but if the general American public learns of the fertility of this country, all the politics in the world can't keep them from fighting for possession here."

"I have written much about it home," said Narcissa. "But that is a mere pin-prick. We need to send a broadside. You are doing a splendid thing, Brother Lee. God speed you!"

"God speed you, indeed!" Marcus laid his hand on Lee's shoulder. "Did you leave all well at your mission? How is your wife?"

"That is my greatest anxiety," said the preacher. "We look for a baby in July. But she would have me go. And unless I start now, another year must go by. In the meantime, Dr. McLoughlin is in London, making medicine, as the Indians say!"

"But she has other white women with her!" exclaimed Narcissa.

"Which is what you did not have, poor soul!" said he, his voice and eyes infinitely tender, as he looked at Narcissa, in whose lap little Alice Clarissa was being prepared for bed.

"I had Marcus!" Narcissa smiled at the doctor.

"So you did! If they get word to you in time, Dr. Whitman, it would take a load from my mind if you'd go to her." Lee looked wistfully at Marcus.

"You can count on it!" declared Marcus. "If only they'll notify me."

"I'll see to that!" Lee gave a sigh of relief and began asking questions about the Cayuse and about Spalding's work among the Nez Percés.

He was a good listener and Marcus was eager to ask his opinion on many problems of Indian character. The two men differed, essentially, in all matters of creed and spiritual conduct, yet they took to each other mightily. When Marcus asked the clergyman to hold service for him, the following day, Lee laughed and said:

"I suppose I'm not to preach a doctrinal sermon!"

"The Indians won't mind, but I might be moved to rise in meeting and contradict you, which would upset my few poor converts, terribly. The priest at Fort Walla Walla has done enough of that."

Lee flushed. "Do you know that Père Blanchet had the impertinence to insist on repeating the Catholic marriage service over the marriages I've performed at my mission?" he cried.

"I'd have felt like—like—" began Marcus indignantly.

Narcissa suddenly laughed. "Like proving one doesn't have Christian feelings toward a Catholic, I suppose!"

The two men laughed with her and a moment later Lee agreed to preach a non-doctrinal sermon.

Sunday passed uneventfully and Monday at dawn they sped Lee on his long journey.

Late in June, the Whitmans began to expect word from the Methodist mission regarding Mrs. Lee, and Marcus returned from a preaching trip to the Cayuse buffalo camp, in order to be within immediate reach. When the fourth of July passed without news, he resolved to start for the Willamette, and began his preparations at once for leaving on the sixth. But, on the afternoon of the fifth, a courier galloped up to the door, a courier in a scarlet coat, on a foaming horse.

"Well, Miles!" cried the doctor, "what good wind brings you?"

"Not a very good wind, Doctor!" replied Miles, his young face curiously serious. "Mrs. Lee died on June twenty-sixth. Her baby died on June seventh."

Marcus groaned. "Why didn't they send for me? Why didn't they? Narcissa!" as his wife appeared at the door. "Poor Mrs. Lee is gone and her baby, too."

"It was a boy," said Miles, huskily.

Narcissa did not speak. She looked from the two men to Mount Hood, quivering in unearthly beauty against the summer blue. As she gazed, she was swept by such bitterness of spirit that her heart actually seemed to burn within her. Was there no limit to the sacrifice God asked of women? For what reason had He led Ann Pitman by that terrible ship-journey round the Horn, to the mission on the Willamette, to marriage with Jason Lee,—if only death was to be her portion?

Marcus and Miles watched Narcissa, with something of

awe in their eyes: as if they felt hers was an understanding of the tragedy that a man could not compass.

After a moment Marcus said, gently, "Come into the house, Miles, and rest."

"I must stop only long enough to eat," said Miles. "I'm sent by James Douglas to bear the news to Jason Lee. They think I can overtake him before he reaches the States. Lord, but I hate the errand. Look!" He drew from its wrapping a letter, black-bordered, and bearing a huge black seal of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Narcissa shuddered. "Put it away, Miles, and come in to supper."

Within the cabin was Sarah Hall, hurriedly putting Alice Clarissa into company clothes. Miles stared at the tall, slender girl, who gave him an appraising glance as she calmly slipped a clean frock over the baby's curly head.

"Are you that same Sarah I saw here, over a year ago?" demanded Miles.

"You didn't act as if you saw me, as I remember," retorted Sarah, with a sniff.

"But you were just a shave-headed little girl," protested Miles, with a grin. "I bet you've grown a foot. And look at that baby! Say, isn't she a beauty!"

He got down on his knees before Alice Clarissa, who looked at him with the dignity that belongs to babyhood.

"Come here to your Uncle Miles and see what he has in this big old pocket," he whispered, peering intently into the yawning slash in his red coat.

Alice Clarissa moved slowly toward him. "Baby see," she said, gravely, and a moment later her curly head was resting against Miles' cheek.

Sarah, in her best red calico dress, watched the two, with an expression in which jealousy struggled with friendliness. Marcus and Narcissa smiled at each other.

"She loves me next best to her mother," said Sarah.

"That won't last, after she really gets to know her Uncle Miles!" Miles' eyes danced. "Women always have a weakness for me!"

Sarah elevated her small nose. "Silly!" she sniffed.

Miles rose and tossed the delighted baby in the air. "Oh, you beauty!" he cried. "Are you going to have your mother's voice, too?"

"She can sing a little nursery rime with me, now," said Narcissa. "It's really remarkable! She could hum with me before she could talk."

"There's some one at the door, Dr. Whitman," said Sarah.

The group, absorbed in watching the baby, turned to find standing on the doorstep, a tall man in a priest's soutane.

"I am Père Demers," he said. "May I, perhaps, intrude while I speak to Courier Goodyear?"

"Certainly! Come in, sir!" exclaimed Marcus, his bitterness against the priest submerged, for the moment, by his hospitable instincts.

Narcissa bowed gravely and Miles said, coolly, "How are you, Père?"

"To put it frankly," said the priest, looking at Miles from brown eyes that were blazing with anger, "I am greatly agitated. I have news of the utmost importance that should go to Governor Simpson with all speed. I demand of you, at Fort Walla Walla, that you carry that news to Peace River, at once. You defy me. You defy Factor Pambrun. I now come to tell you that, unless you obey me in this, I shall have you arrested."

Miles, with the baby in his arms, his fine blond head erect, his blue eyes cold as ice, smiled slightly as he replied:

"As I told you, I carry a death notice from James Douglas to Jason Lee. What right have you or Pierre Pambrun, either, to countermand his orders?"

"Did we not both assure you, we would be responsible?" demanded Père Demers. "Do you think I shall permit you

to defy the Church in order to carry word of one heretic's death to another? Death to all heretics, I say." His voice rose excitedly.

"Shucks!" Miles exclaimed. "What's religion got to do with it? James Douglas said it was a matter of *noblesse oblige* and he explained that, by saying that, as the controlling power in this country, he was obliged to perform all the human kindnesses he could. Common sense, I say, to do things that'll help overcome some of the prejudices against the Hudson's Bay Company."

The priest advanced, his jaw set, and spoke through beautiful white teeth. "You return with me to Fort Walla Walla, thence to Fort Vancouver, to be disposed of by Chief Trader Douglas, in the absence of Dr. McLoughlin."

"In the meantime, what becomes of that important message to Governor Simpson?" sneered Miles. "Say, you take me for a green fool, don't you? Don't you realize that I know exactly what is troubling you? You don't want Jason Lee to get into the States and start a lot of Americans to emigrating here. And you've fixed up a plot that, I'll give Pambrun credit, he don't know about. But the Sioux Indians know about it. And so do I. And I'm leaving in an hour, to overtake Jason Lee before he reaches the Forks of the Platte. You'd better not take me to James Douglas —even if you could. He'd make a Scotch broth of you for trying to harm Jason Lee. He and Lee are sworn friends."

Père Demers, during Miles' tirade, which was uttered in a tone remarkable for its young coolness, glared at him with eyes that did not change expression. When the young man paused, the priest said calmly:

"I am not your match in physique. But I warn you that I shall follow you to Fort Hall."

"No, you won't, my friend!" cried Marcus. "You're not my match in physique either."

Without a word Père Demers walked out of the door. Marcus followed him.

Miles kissed Alice Clarissa and placed her gently on the floor. Then he sat down at the table where Narcissa had placed bread, milk and cold venison.

"I'll eat and awa', as the Governor says," he chuckled.

"Do you really know of such a plot, Miles?" asked Narcissa, in a low voice.

"Certainly I do! I've got some good Indian friends. Especially among the ladies!" This with a twinkle at Sarah, who was pouring him a cup of milk.

"But, Miles, you are making a terrible accusation!" exclaimed Narcissa.

Miles gave her a clear look. "This is a terrible country," he said quietly. "The Catholic Church and the Hudson's Bay Company aren't a lot of women, you know, Mrs. Whitman. Though the Company, as I said, has nothing to do with Demers' deviltry. When I leave Lee, I'm going to report to His Excellency, you can bet!"

Narcissa looked out the door. "I hope the doctor will keep his temper," she said.

"That's more than the Frenchman will do," grunted Miles.

"Miles, don't you want help? Are you sure you'll reach Mr. Lee in time?" asked Narcissa. "Oh, it doesn't sound real!"

"Who could ride swifter than me?" demanded Miles, blandly. "More'n that, I started an Indian friend of mine off last night. She'll travel like a cloud."

"You like to boast about women, don't you?" inquired Sarah. "It's the only childish thing you do."

For the first time, Miles blushed. He bolted the remainder of his food and rose from the table.

"Here I go!" he said. "Bring out the bagpipes, Monique!" He kissed Narcissa on the forehead, Alice

Clarissa on the back of her dimpled neck, planted a vigorous kiss on Sarah Hall's astonished lips and leaped out the door.

Marcus was standing beside the priest's mare and Charley Compo was leading up the doctor's young horse, Cayuse.

"I have given Père Demers his choice of staying here for twenty-four hours, Miles," called Marcus, "or riding with me into Fort Walla Walla. He has chosen Fort Walla Walla. Is there anything more I can do for you, my boy?"

"That's plenty, thank you!" exclaimed Miles. He vaulted into the saddle, roweled his horse till the indignant animal bucked, then, with a sweep of his gray beaver through the air, was off.

Marcus and Père Demers mounted at once and started at a rapid trot for the fort.

Narcissa awaited the doctor's return, the next day, with keenest anxiety. He returned in the afternoon, jaded but complacent.

"Pambrun pooh-poohs at the idea of a plot," he said, "but I believe Miles. At any rate, he's persuaded the priest to go up to Fort Vancouver, and I'm betting on our young courier."

"I suppose there is nothing we can do but await the turn of events," said Narcissa. "My heart aches for Jason Lee."

"If some one were bringing me word of my wife's death," said Marcus, "I'd hope the Sioux would take my scalp."

He kissed Narcissa, with more emotion than he'd permitted himself to show for many weeks, and turned to his supper.

CHAPTER XII

THE RETURN OF THE COURIER

UNLESS a stray trapper brought them news, they could not hope to hear from Miles for months, and so Marcus and Narcissa returned quietly to the routine of the mission. The fate of Jason Lee became one of their accepted anxieties, just as the probable attitude of Umtippe had become. For when the old Cayuse returned in the fall, he would find his nephew weaned and Narcissa's slender curb upon his acts removed. Narcissa gave many anxious hours to trying to evolve some appeal to any sense of decency the chief might have concealed under his surliness; but her anxiety was unproductive.

The long summer days marched on, beautiful and serene, as only Oregon days can be. The two years' limit which had been set before Narcissa could look for word from home had long since passed and she began to watch daily for mail. Messengers from Fort Walla Walla usually arrived, late in the afternoon, and Narcissa formed the habit of walking, at that time, to the top of the little hill near the cabin. Here, with Alice Clarissa and Sarah Hall, she would watch for a long hour for what she told the children would be a messenger from Angelica. It was the one rest period she permitted herself to take, during the day.

But, although little cavalcades of Indian braves, gay in blankets and feathers, passed along the trail; although squaws, with their ponies dragging the whole of their household miscellanies, toiled frequently past the hill; although, often enough, a trapper, with a string of pack horses, jogged up to ask for a night's lodging and a look

at the white woman with the fine hands and the glorious voice, the messenger from Angelica did not appear.

This mute watching depressed the doctor. It made him suspicious that Narcissa's unfailing cheerfulness was not real. And, on a certain afternoon in late summer, he followed her up the hill to beg her to desist. But, at the hill crest, before he could utter his protest, he was met by a shrill cry from Sarah.

"Look! They're white women, too!"

A train of pack horses was coming from the east.

"It looks like William Gray at the head!" exclaimed Narcissa.

"It is Gray!" cried Marcus.

They rushed down the hill. It was young Gray, indeed! Young Gray, with a brand new wife, with a young schoolmaster, and with three other missionary couples. With tears and broken phrases of thanksgiving, the newcomers dismounted and were welcomed by the Whitmans.

The resources of the mission were strained to the utmost to care for such an unprecedented number of guests. But, after the first moment of dismay, Marcus and Narcissa found ways and means. The new missionaries had come well equipped with bedding and cooking utensils. Before bedtime, Indian lodges were erected close to the cabin; a lodge for each couple and one for Cornelius Rogers, the teacher. The common table was set in the cabin and, over the first meal, a discussion was held as to the future locations of the members of the new group.

William Gray had informed the newcomers, clearly, of the conditions to be found in the Columbia country, and also had prejudiced them, violently, against the Hudson's Bay Company. When Marcus proposed that the men folk start with him on the morrow, to consult with James Douglas about locating the new missions, a violent chorus of opposition greeted him. The country didn't belong to Great

Britain! Americans had every right to settle where they chose. The American Board had told William Gray that the missions must keep clear of politics. That meant, keep clear of the Hudson's Bay Company.

"But why not maintain friendly relations with our source of supply?" asked Narcissa.

"Source of supply, nothing!" retorted Gray rudely. "We were informed by Captain Thing that stringent orders had been received from Governor Simpson that absolutely no supplies of any kind are to be sold to Americans, from now on. We are forbidden to trade with the Indians!—I, for one, won't hurt my self-respect by running to Fort Vancouver to ask for orders, delivered under the thin guise of advice."

With a grunt of impatience, Marcus opened his lips, but before he could speak, Narcissa interposed.

"We've everything to gain by keeping friendly relations with the Hudson's Bay Company. The one earthly protection we have from Indian massacre is the Indians' fear of the British and their confidence in British justice. You have a wife with you now, dear William Gray! You cannot, for her sake, be as independent and defiant as you have been. After all, we are here to convert Indians. We shall convert many more, if we work in cooperation with Dr. McLoughlin than we shall if we try to go alone."

"That sounds like common sense to me," said Cushing Eells, one of the missionaries. "What I want to avoid more than anything is wasting the mission substance in political maneuvering, which is what I've heard is the weakness of the Methodist mission."

"You veer with the wind, Brother Eells!" exclaimed William Gray, bitterly. "And you, Mrs. Whitman, have developed British sympathies in the year and a half since I saw you."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Narcissa. "I'm more ardently

American than I ever was! But I've learned that we cannot use a broadax against a rapier. I propose to learn the use of the rapier."

Elkanah Walker, a bashful young man, with eyes of great intelligence, watched Narcissa with keen interest. "You are giving us a new angle, Mrs. Whitman. Our friend Gray is a man of intense prejudices."

"I'm glad I am!" cried William. "I'm no namby-pamby! There's no room for such in this country."

"Doctor," said Walker, "supposing you give us a statement of your attitude toward the Hudson's Bay Company, with the reasons for it."

Marcus plunged, at once, into explanations and a recital of incidents. Narcissa watched the faces around the table. In her desire to be helpful to these new arrivals, her first impulse had been to tell of her growing disillusions as to the value of their work with the Indians, to explain her apprehensions, her fears, her hopes for the future.

But as she listened to their comments and questions, she realized that anything she could say would be futile. They were filled with the same fires of enthusiasm that had burned in her own heart, two or more years ago. Only actual living with the Indians could convince them that among the Indians was no fuel to keep the flames alight. She would content herself with counteracting young Gray's tendency to butt his head against the stone wall of the Hudson's Bay Company's prestige.

It was midnight before she and Marcus had persuaded the missionaries to make the trip to Fort Vancouver. But at last, aided by the influence of the women folks, who rose to Narcissa's carefully thrown bait—the beauties and comforts of the Chief Factor's ménage—young Gray was voted down and it was decided that the party would leave on the following day for the trip down the Columbia.

Gray yielded with good grace but announced that, as the

American Board had designated himself and his wife, with Cornelius Rogers for Lap-wai, they would leave on the morrow for the Clearwater. He then yawned loudly and started for bed.

Both Marcus and Narcissa had been trying, for hours, to get a word alone with Gray. Now, at a despairing glance from Narcissa, the doctor followed him out the door.

"Gray," he said, in a low voice, "did the Board say anything to you of having received drastic criticisms from Spalding about us?"

"No!" replied William wonderingly. "Of course, they asked all kinds of questions, but they got no complaints from me, you bet! I even remember that they complained that they'd had no letters from either mission, last year. What's worrying you?"

Marcus, after swearing William to secrecy, told him Pambrun's tale. William listened, then cried angrily, "That fellow will wreck the missions yet! But the Board had not received that letter when I was there. I'm glad you told me. I'll watch him like a hawk from now on. Don't worry any more, doctor, now I'm back!" He went into his lodge and Marcus, somewhat reassured, returned to the cabin.

He left for Fort Vancouver, the next day, with the remainder of the party.

It was three weeks before he returned and, to Narcissa's surprise, he returned alone. James Douglas, it seemed, acting in Dr. McLoughlin's absence, had won the missionaries' hearts by his hospitality, his interest and his sympathy. He had, indeed, refused to sell them anything, but, out of his personal supplies, he had made them gifts of the necessities which they had not been able to bring over the mountains and had offered them the use of the horse brigades of the Company in moving to their locations. The locations which he had suggested, were two: one among the

Spokan Indians, the other, with a remote branch of the Nez Percés. So the Walkers and the Eells were already building their cabins near the Spokan and the Smiths, a hundred miles northeast of Waii-lat-pu, among the Nez Percés.

"So," said Narcissa, when Marcus had ended his recital, "we all are grouped for the convenience of the watchful eye of Governor Simpson. The Methodist missions are where Père Blanchet can watch them from Fort Vancouver, the American Board missions, where Père Demers can oversee them. By the way, how did the Catholic fathers treat you?"

Marcus grinned. "Père Blanchet had business up Puget Sound way, the day after we arrived. And Père Demers, as I learned when I passed Fort Walla Walla, on my way back, is making a parochial call on Fort Colville, which lies only seventy miles west of the Spokan mission! Umtippe rode out from the fort with me. He says Père Demers told him he was to say his prayers, count his beads and kill Protestants. Then he'd reach heaven. I don't believe Demers was so raw, do you?"

"No, I don't, indeed," said Narcissa. "So Umtippe is back! I wonder what his first plan for making trouble will be?"

Marcus shook his head, adding cheerfully, "We'll convert the old villain yet!"

"What had James Douglas to say regarding Miles' attitude toward Père Demers?"

"He said he gave the priest a good wigging for his officiousness. When I told him what Miles had said about the Sioux plot, he looked skeptical, but I could see that it bothered him. I hoped to get some word of Miles, but the boy evidently kept off the well-traveled trails. Well, now that chore is done, I'm going to begin actual building of the new house. The last of the adobes must have dried well while I was away."

Narcissa nodded and long after Marcus was deep in slumber, she lay thinking of the helplessness of the new missions in case of trouble and of the terrible skill with which the priests were able to influence the Indians. If only she and Marcus had a fraction of that skill!

The next morning, as soon as her school work was done, Narcissa gave herself an unwonted interval of rest. She went out to watch the doctor lay the first adobes, above the foundations that had been dug nearly a year before. Alice Clarissa accompanied her. The size and strength of the child were wonderful. At a year and a half of age, she was as large and as mentally advanced as the average child a year older. She walked well, and could talk like a child of three. As soon as Narcissa had established herself on a pile of brick, Alice Clarissa left her to follow her father.

A moment later Umtippe appeared. He stalked up to Narcissa, the white horse's tail flaunting over his great shoulder, his eyes smoldering.

"My nephew is weaned!" he said.

"Yes," answered Narcissa, "and isn't he a wonderful, strong boy! His mother must give him three cups of milk every day now, until he is six years old."

"He has teeth for meat and camas. He gets no more milk!" Umtippe grinned maliciously.

Narcissa shrugged her shoulders and turned to watch Alice Clarissa at play. "Don't you think the little White Cayuse has grown well, this summer?" she asked.

Umtippe grunted and spoke dejectedly. "I used to be happy. I made war. I prayed to the spirits. I had many wives. You have troubled me. You tell me my heart is bad and that unless I pray as you do, your God will burn me forever. I wish to keep my heart as it is. I wish my people to keep theirs. So I am going to give you an order. Either you must stop telling us we are bad, or you must go away. This land is mine."

Marcus moved impatiently to the other side of the foundation. He would not trust himself to hear more. Narcissa looked from the chief, in his red coat, to the wide fields with their harvests, brown against the blue of the sky.

"You gave us the land, freely," she said. "You prove that you are a sinner when you try to take it back from God and us."

Umtippe winced at the word sinner as though he had received a lash across the face. "I am not a sinner!" he shouted. "The priest at Fort Walla Walla says I am not. He says I'm not to be blamed for what I did before I was baptized. You are a crazy fool and so is the doctor! You'd better stop building the new lodge, or I shall tell my young men to trample it down."

"It's the permanent look of the new house that troubles him," thought Narcissa. But she would not give in one inch.

"God will hold you accountable for any bad deed," she said aloud, eyeing the old Cayuse firmly.

He buttoned his red coat to his chin and shuddered. He feared this Christian religion almost as much as he hated it. All his Indian pride and sense of mysticism revolted from its tenets.

"What is the new lodge for?" His voice was surly.

"For us to live and work in. There will be a room in it for the Indians, so that you need not come into our part of the house. It will be a large, pleasant room, with a fireplace in it. I shall have the school there."

"Why do you wish to shut the Indians out of other rooms?" demanded Umtippe. "We shall go where we wish, that is, if we let you build this at all."

Narcissa sighed. Again she looked from the Indian to the sweep of undulating plains that lay, a vast bronze and blue carpet between Waii-lat-pu and the tranquil heights of

the Blue Mountains. Umtippe watched her threateningly and had opened his lips to speak further, when a gurgle of childish laughter sounded from the foundations of the new house. Marcus, laughing too, swung his little daughter up from the sand, in the cellar where she had been playing. She ran toward her mother.

"Mother!" she cried. "Dolly's lodge. Come, see!" Then she caught sight of the old Indian. She ran to him and threw herself against his knees. "Oh, dee' Umtippe! Umtippe!"

The chief's face was transformed by a smile. "Is the lodge big enough for the Cayuse chief?" he asked, in his own tongue.

The child answered him in the same language. "Come, see, Umtippe. Come!"

She tugged impatiently at the chief's hand. He allowed her to lead him to the foundations, where, ignoring the doctor, he stood for a long time engrossed in the child's prattle. Narcissa watched the two, filled with a nameless apprehension.

After perhaps a quarter of an hour, Alice Clarissa led the old chief back to her mother.

"Mother! Baby have doggie!" she cried. "Umtippe's doggie."

"I am going to give the little White Cayuse a dog," said the Cayuse. "Listen, white squaw, I am going to allow you to build the new lodge if you will agree that the Indians shall use all of it."

Narcissa shook her head. "There will be one room in the new house for the Indians."

Umtippe snatched up the child. "I shall keep her till you agree!" he roared.

Marcus started hastily toward the group on the adobes, but at his wife's warning gesture, he paused. Alice Clarissa was crowing with delight.

"Swing baby high!" she cried. "Rock-a-by high!" Then in a flute-like voice she piped:

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top!
When the wind blows the cradle will rock. . . ."

Umtippe, holding her high, listened as if hypnotized. This was a new accomplishment of Alice Clarissa's, for him.

Narcissa, white-faced, but with manner unruffled, said quietly, "Who will teach her other songs if you take her from me?"

Alice Clarissa struggled to be set down. The chief placed her carefully on the ground, then said gruffly, his eyes full of tears, "You said you'd teach her to sing, and you have!"

He strode off to the Indian encampment.

Narcissa, with a shuddering sigh, took Alice Clarissa on her lap. She and Marcus gave each other a long look, but they made no comment on the episode.

When Marcus came into the cabin for supper, he brought with him a small gray puppy, about three months old. He set it on the floor, where it cowered, shivering and whimpering.

"Umtippe's gift, I suppose," said Narcissa.

Marcus nodded. "I washed him in the creek, so it's safe for Alice Clarissa to play with him."

Narcissa had been restraining the baby. She now let go of the little skirt and Alice Clarissa pounced on the pup.

"I wish I could believe it is a gesture of real friendship from Umtippe," she said. "Somehow, the gift of a dog does seem the most friendly kind of a thing to do! But I fear the 'Greeks bearing gifts.'"

"I know," agreed Marcus. "That goes as far as you and I are concerned, but I don't think we can doubt his affec-

tion for our baby. All I hope is, that he won't demand the dog back, about the time we have him well trained. An Indian's gift is an uncertain quantity! I've thought of a name for him. How would Trapper do?"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Narcissa. "He's a pretty little fellow. He looks like the sheep dogs at Fort Vancouver. I hope Umtippe didn't steal him."

Marcus grunted comically and told Sarah Hall to give young Trapper a drink of milk.

"The Kitchie Okema has a dog like that," said Sarah Hall. "He had it sent from home in Scotland. It made me homesick."

"Homesick, Sarah dear?" asked Narcissa. "For what?"

Sarah's wistful gray eyes grew puzzled. "I don't know why I said that. What I wish, always, is that I never have to leave you and the baby."

"Not even to marry, Sarah?" laughed Marcus.

Sarah's young lips curled. "Marry! Not I! I'm going to be a teacher and earn my own way."

"Whoa! my prancing steed!" shouted a familiar voice without. The door swung wide and Miles appeared. "Seven rounds from the cannon, if you please, doctor! I'm here!"

"And Jason Lee!" cried Marcus, seizing Miles' proffered hand.

"Is safely preaching in the States," replied Miles. "I caught him on the plains beyond the Platte and made him turn back to Fort Laramie to await the fur brigade."

"He bore up, bravely, under the bad news you brought him, I know," said Narcissa, a hand on Miles' shoulder.

"Well, he felt pretty awful, but he's a man, every foot and inch of him," replied Miles. "Golly, Sarah Hall, you get sweeter looking by the minute!"

Sarah, standing pink-cheeked by the fireplace, Alice

Clarissa clinging to her skirts, giggled and tossed her head.

"That's more'n I can say for you. You look as if you'd been through a massacre."

"Don't I!" agreed Miles, coolly, glancing at his torn red coat and his tattered boots. "Guess you'll have to sew me up, before I report to the Governor, Sarah!" He picked up the baby and kissed her several times.

"The Governor?" asked Marcus quickly.

Miles nodded. "I'm to meet him at Peace River in the spring. He's in England, now. I'm going up to Fort Vancouver from here and outfit for a winter trip, with mail and books. I came back by a short cut, through the Blue Mountains. It was rough going. That's why I'm all torn to pieces. I believe you could bring the wagon through that way, doctor, though, if you'd do a lot of slashing. It's only timber that made me my trouble."

"Make me a map," said Marcus, promptly, "while supper is getting ready."

The two men were engrossed in the map and Narcissa was placing the baby in her crib, when a rap sounded at the door and Charley Compo entered.

"The chief of the Walla Wallapoos is at the camp to-night," he said. "He says the King George's missionary at Fort Walla Walla sent him up here to get Umtippe to drive you away."

He paused, looking at Narcissa with somber friendliness. He seemed, Narcissa thought, to have developed and retained a certain amount of liking for his former pupil. She never, however, had felt sure enough of this to hope that he would do them any kindness. She scarcely dared believe now that there was not something sinister in his visit.

"Umtippe," the Cayuse went on, "is angry in his heart because you are building the new house. He is listening gladly to the Walla Wallapoos' whisperings. You must come to the council lodge to-night and have the little White

Cayuse sing. That will soften all the hearts that hear her."

"Oh, Charley! My baby! She must not!" cried Narcissa.

"She's only got those few lines, Charley," protested Marcus. "And her little voice won't carry through that huge lodge."

The Cayuse stood stolidly by the door. Sarah, eyeing him, spoke to him in the Iroquois tongue. He replied and the young girl blanched. "He says"—she turned to Marcus —"that massacre will be done to-night unless the Walla Wallapoos' chief and many of the Cayuse braves hear and see our baby. We must do it."

Narcissa wrung her hands and swept across the room to gaze down at the sleeping child. But she did not speak. Marcus and Miles looked at each other in helpless anger. Sarah Hall spoke rapidly to Charley in Iroquois. He nodded and, with the others, awaited Narcissa's decision. She looked up from the baby, one long hand on the cradle bar, her face dead white and her eyes blue fire in the candlelight.

"If I permit this, it must be agreed that she sings but once and that she does not leave my arms for any Indian," she said in a low voice.

"Yes, I promise!" said Compo. "Come!"

"Wait a moment!" cried Miles. "Let us do this with some of the Governor's pomp. Mrs. Whitman, put on your gray silk dress, and Sarah, your best. Doctor, you and I must polish up. Compo, go to the Camp and say that a delegation from the mission will arrive in half an hour to show them the progress made by the little White Cayuse."

"Good! Good!" exclaimed Compo, turning quickly out the door.

"How do we know this is not some dirty trick to burn our cabin down!" cried Narcissa.

"It's not a trick!" Sarah took Alice Clarissa's little Sun-

day dress of white from the closet. "Compo is our friend."

"Have you any so-called converts among the Cayuse?" asked Miles, pulling off his coat and looking ruefully at its gaping rents. "Any you could hope would stand by you in an emergency?"

"Only a few of the women, Narcissa's friends," said Marcus, bitterly.

"Have you ever sung anything but hymns for the Indians, Mrs. Whitman?" asked Miles.

"No," replied Narcissa, beginning to dress the still sleeping baby. "Sarah, take needle and thread, will you, and pull together the worst rents in Miles' coat."

Miles yielded up the coat with a broad grin, then turned back to Narcissa. "Fine! Then the moment the baby finishes her song, you must pipe up the 'Poor Exile of Erin' and follow that with all the gay, pretty and sad songs you know. But not a hymn among the lot. Sing as you used to, to us, evenings on the trail. Be Gad, you drew our hearts from our chests!"

Narcissa looked at Miles, with a dawning expression of understanding and hope.

"Yes, Miles, I'll do it! My baby and I! Perhaps we'll be useful to the mission yet! Come, Sarah, let us go into the lean-to and change."

The half hour was only just over when, supperless, but clad in their best, they left the cabin.

The November night was as mild as young April. There was a clear, high-sailing moon that glistened on the river, on the black and silver plains and on the far, magic crest of Mount Hood. When the silent little company reached the lodge, they found Charley Compo standing sentinel at the door. He did not speak, but lifted the flap of buffalo hide; and Marcus entered, followed by Narcissa, the baby in her arms. Miles led Sarah by the hand, his eyes dancing with excitement.

The lodge was by no means an unimposing edifice. It was formed by the joining of many single lodges, whose buffalo-hide coverings, carefully sewed together by the squaws, were covered with line drawings in many colors. There was a gay scene within. A fire burned brilliantly in the center of the room, round which were seated fifty or sixty braves in gaudy headdresses and varicolored blankets. Not a squaw was to be seen. There was a sudden hush of voices as the mission party came in. Narcissa tossed back her beaver cape, and little Alice Clarissa blinked in the lurid light. Before Narcissa could begin cajoling the baby to sing, however, Miles sprang forward, holding up his hand impressively, and began a speech in very fair Cayuse.

"The Kitchie Okema," he said, "is a friend to the doctor and to the doctor's wife and to the little White Cayuse. I—yes, I—with my red coat, am the Kitchie Okema's messenger. He has sent me to you to ask you to listen to the first song of this fledgling song-bird, born among the Cayuse. I have not yet heard it. I thought it not fitting I should hear it until the braves of the Cayuse had heard. But now, let us give ear together to the magic that has been given to the Cayuse as a favor from the Great Spirit."

Narcissa smiled into her baby's face and tossed her lightly in her arms. "Alice Clarissa sing with mother!" and she hummed the little rime as she held the child aloft.

Alice Clarissa laughed, as though entirely unconscious of the breathless audience before her. Indian convocations were an old story to her. All summer she had attended them in her mother's arms. She laughed, then, at her mother's soft repetition of the song, her extraordinary little voice rippled forth as naturally as a bird's notes, and she sang the nursery lullaby so clearly, so sweetly and so correctly that even Marcus, tone deaf as he was, was thrilled to the heart.

Narcissa kissed the baby and laughed with her, tossed her again, and once more, the tiny treble notes floated across the lodge. Then, as the last word died away, and before the Indians could more than begin their swelling Aa-a-h of applause, Narcissa began the song which Miles had bade her sing. Instantly her audience became silent and motionless.

For nearly an hour, Narcissa, tall and alien, her golden hair flashing in the ruddy firelight, stood singing to the Indians. She sang Scotch and Irish ballads for the most part, and the Cayuse rocked and sobbed, begging for more and more. Narcissa scarcely paused, until as the final notes of "Kathleen Mavourneen" left her lips, Charley Compo suddenly jumped from his place near the fire, cast off his blanket and shouted:

"I'm saved! I'm saved! My wicked heart has melted. Pray for me, doctor! Pray!"

The astonished Marcus hesitated, but only long enough to be convinced by the interpreter's face that he was sincere. Then he rushed to Compo and knelt with him in prayer. Narcissa, after a moment, began "Robin Adair."

The older Indians watched Charley Compo with doubt and disgust struggling in their faces. But when he lifted his eyes, streaming with tears and called brokenly, "Savior, I am Yours!" half a dozen of the younger braves rose and began to plead with the white man's God to receive the burden of their sins.

Marcus worked like one inspired. His face was the face of an apostle. Miles Goodyear, after a short time, told Narcissa he would take Alice Clarissa home, and with the baby in his arms, he and Sarah Hall left the lodge.

Two hours passed before this startling harvest of souls was ended. At the end of that period, a dozen of the friends of Charley Compo had been received as Christian

brothers by Marcus. During this time, Umtippe and a ferocious looking chief, whom Narcissa took to be the visiting Walla Wallapoo, sat before the fire demanding more songs from Narcissa. It was evident that the purpose of the Walla Wallapoo's visit had been forgotten. And when Narcissa's voice refused to quaver another note, Umtippe allowed Marcus to lead her out of the lodge without further protest. The Whitmans moved out into the moonlight, silent in the excess of their relief and joy.

The cabin was lighted when they reached it. Alice Clarissa was asleep in her crib, but there was no sign of Miles or Sarah. Marcus looked at his watch.

"Ten o'clock! What does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"I saw two figures on the hilltop as we passed," said Narcissa, "but I supposed they belonged to Indians. It must be Sarah and Miles. I'll go out and call them in."

"This is no time of night for you to be searching the sagebrush," declared Marcus. "I'll go myself and tell Miles what I think of him."

"Let me go, Marcus!" pleaded Narcissa. "I'm sure they are on the hill. We might have expected this. They're no longer children. Don't let's do or say anything that will drive them to deceive us."

"I'll lock Sarah up!" roared Marcus. "Ten o'clock! That child!"

" 'That child' is nearly eighteen years old," said Narcissa, quietly. "Let me go to the hilltop, Marcus! If they're not there, I'll come back at once and you shall go."

"Very well!" Marcus gave in reluctantly.

Narcissa slipped on her cape again and went out into the moonlight. Marcus had, months before, placed a crude log bench for Narcissa at the hilltop. Here, Miles and Sarah were sitting. They turned at the sound of her approach.

"It's late, children," she said, quietly, "and much too cool for Sarah to be sitting here."

"I guess you mean you don't want me up here with Miles!" exclaimed Sarah with a little catch in her voice. "I won't hurt Miles, even if I am half Indian."

"How many converts came over?" asked Miles, genially.

Before Narcissa could reply, Sarah began to weep. "You are watching me!" she sobbed. "You are like Miles. You thought I was like these squaws that the men can do as they like with. You—"

"Wait a moment, Sarah," said Narcissa, gently. "You are excited. Don't say things now that you'll regret tomorrow."

"Well, I've taught him different, anyhow," wept Sarah.

"You certainly have!" exclaimed Miles. "She boxed my ears, Mrs. Whitman, just before you came up."

"Splendid!" Narcissa pulled Sarah's cold hand within her arm. "And have you learned your lesson, Miles?"

"What lesson?" asked Miles, half defiantly and half sheepishly.

"I hate all you dirty white men except the doctor!" cried Sarah.

"It looks to me, Miles," said Narcissa, "as if you'd made a rather pitiful mistake. I'm disappointed in you."

There was a moment's silence, then Miles said, "I guess I'd better beg your pardon, Sarah, and you can slap me again if it'll make you feel any better."

With a sob Sarah buried her face against Narcissa's shoulder.

"Well, are you going to pardon me?" demanded Miles, half belligerently. "A man isn't expected to get down on his knees, I hope!"

"A *man* wouldn't make this kind of mistake, Miles; at least the kind of a man I hoped you'd grown to be!" Narcissa's voice was scornful. "Come, Sarah, I must tuck you into bed."

She led the way back to the cabin and left Miles to

Marcus' baleful eyes, while she tucked Sarah into her cot in the lean-to.

"Don't cry so, dear," she said, as she smoothed the blanket over the girl's slender shoulders. "He's just the puppy age. You mustn't take him seriously."

"I knew it!" wept Sarah, "but I thought he was such a nice puppy! And he wanted me to be his squaw!"

Narcissa's lips were compressed, but before she could speak, the young girl went on. "I should think he'd know that after I'd lived with you, I couldn't be like those old half-breed things around here."

"You couldn't be like them, anyhow!" exclaimed Narcissa. "You have fine blood in you and we all expect you to live up to it. Don't think too much about Miles, dear. He's not worth it."

"I haven't thought about anything else since the very first time I saw him," quavered Sarah Hall. Then she pulled the covers over her head.

"Poor dear!" whispered Narcissa. "But at least you have the comfort of knowing you did what was right."

"It's not a bit of comfort!" came back Sarah's muffled voice. "Oh, I'm terribly unhappy! You've never, never been as unhappy as I am!"

"I know, dear! I know!"

"No, you can't know!" Sarah jerked the blanket from her head and glared at the quiet face above hers. Something that she read there caused her to throw her arm about Narcissa's neck and press her hot young cheek to Narcissa's cool one. "Forgive me, dear Madam Whitman! I love you, always!"

"And I love you, dear little *bonne!*" Narcissa kissed her. "Now try to sleep." She blew out the candle and joined the men in the other room. They were sitting in silence before the fire, Miles with an unwonted look of sulkiness on his frank face. He looked up at Narcissa.

"Well, Mrs. Whitman, I suppose, after this, you'll not want me here any more."

"Of course I'll want you here, more than ever!" exclaimed Narcissa. "How are we to have influence over you unless you are with us as frequently as possible?"

"Then you don't despise me?" asked Miles, some of the sulkiness vanishing.

"I despise what you did, and I'll despise you if you don't mend your ways. Have you forgotten your own contempt for 'squaw men' when you first came to Oregon?" Narcissa warmed her hands at the fire and watched Miles' eyes. "Think what you planned to do, Miles! You know of Governor Simpson's interest in Sarah. You must have recognized that she is quite as interesting and lovely as any white girl. You know how much we love her. Yet you would reduce her to the level of these miserable squaws we see all around us!"

"Madam McLoughlin and Madam Douglas weren't lowered by McLoughlin or Douglas!" said Miles defiantly.

"Oh, then you planned to marry Sarah! She did not so understand your proposition," exclaimed Narcissa.

"I'll never marry any but a white woman," declared Miles. "That's the one thing I've got against the fellows in the Hudson's Bay Company, the way they marry Indians. It's not treating your blood right and, be Gad, I won't do it!"

"No one's asking you to, sir!" roared Marcus. "Only keep your indecent plans clear of our little foster daughter!"

"I've already promised to do so," returned Miles, with injured dignity. "It's nearly midnight; but I think I'll move on toward Fort Walla Walla."

"Perhaps that's as well," agreed Marcus, stiffly.

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Narcissa. "We are not going to part in this frame of mind. I have grown to love Miles like a son or a young brother. I can't bear to

have him go until he's made me feel that he's sorry and ashamed and won't repeat this offense, not only as far as Sarah's concerned, but any girl."

"I promise about Sarah," replied Miles, his face burning, "but—but—" He turned with a helpless gesture to Marcus. "Make her see that a woman can't understand these things, doctor."

"I'll not even try!" retorted Marcus. "Do you think a person of my wife's intelligence can live in this country two years without understanding that rotten morals are the rule? And do you think I could persuade her into believing things have to be so?"

"I'm straighter than the average fellow my age with the Hudson's Bay Company," declared Miles, truculently.

Neither Marcus nor Narcissa replied to this. They both sat looking at the young man as though waiting for something. It was a long time coming. The wolves howled far across the plains and the dogs in the village barked a shrill chorus in reply. The fire died down and was replenished by Marcus. Suddenly Miles flung himself on his knees and buried his blond head in Narcissa's lap.

"Oh, forgive me! Forgive me!" he sobbed. "I've been a dirty dog, thinking I was being a man."

Marcus got up, quietly, and, murmuring something about seeing to the corral gate, he went out. Narcissa smoothed Miles' thick hair, with a gentle hand.

"I know how hard it's been, dear Miles! And it will be harder yet. But there's only one way. And that's God's way. He'll help you."

Miles shook his head. "Only one thing will help me and that's the thought that when I come back here I must be fit to kiss you and Alice Clarissa and Sarah. And I will be! I will be! You can count on me."

Narcissa stooped and kissed the back of his head. "Thank you, Miles!" she whispered.

The boy rose and wiped his eyes, saying after a moment, in his natural voice:

"I suppose a fellow couldn't have a bite to eat!"

"Gracious me!" cried Narcissa. "I'd forgotten that none of us had any supper!"

When Marcus returned, Miles was setting the table, while Narcissa fried venison and the three had a pleasant meal, during which no mention was made of the late unpleasantness.

CHAPTER XIII

MARCUS TURNS THE OTHER CHEEK

MILES departed, the next morning, before Sarah appeared, and Narcissa prayed that the little hurricane was over and would leave no wreckage. But she was reckoning without knowledge of the depth of Sarah Hall's emotions. As the winter set in and the isolation of the mission grew more complete, Sarah grew silent and her childish ways dropped from her. She undertook to help Narcissa with her teaching, work she had scorned before, and she spent many hours alone in the lean-to, gazing out the window, which gave on the west.

The Indians were very restless during the winter. Umtippe, instead of disappearing for the cold months, came back to the camp several times, for the express purpose of watching the progress made by Marcus in building the new house and heckling him at his work. On each of his visits, he made the cabin his daytime headquarters, sitting in the kitchen during all the processes of housework, teaching, meal-getting and eating, and family worship, until it seemed to Narcissa that the mere sight of the wrinkled, bronze-face and the nodding white horse's tail would make her hysterical. He played like a little child with Alice Clarissa, and the puppy, Trapper. He found a keen delight in the adobe blocks Sarah Hall had fashioned for Alice Clarissa and he and the baby would build forts and lodges for hours.

But to all of Narcissa's advances, he turned a deaf ear. He would not learn English, nor to read. Nor would he allow Narcissa to teach his latest wife anything about cooking, although all of the younger squaws had taken to

baking bread as Narcissa had taught them. In the crude mill, set up by Marcus on the creek, he had ground sufficient wheat to supply for the winter both his own household and such of the Indians as had raised wheat. But none of this for Umtippe! He did all that he could to prevent the younger braves from setting plow to the soil. But the craving for bread was stronger even than their fear of the old chief. The long, straight furrows began to radiate in all directions from the Indian encampment.

Only once did Narcissa attempt to argue with Umtippe on the matter.

"You say, yourself, that the buffalo is getting less each year, Umtippe. Unless you Indians learn to raise food, you will starve."

"Better to starve than to eat the white man's bread," snarled Umtippe. "If you try to teach my wife, I'll burn your wheat field next summer."

Narcissa felt that bread-making was a minor point and let it rest.

The activities of Père Demers began to be felt in many ways less obvious than in the refusal of the older Indians to be baptized. Strange tales about the cruelties of Protestants to Indian tribes that once dwelt far toward the rising sun, drifted to the cabin. It became known that Dr. McLoughlin had turned Catholic before leaving for England. Pierre Pambrun had learned to be a catechist and held classes in the fort for Indian children. And old Umtippe appeared at the cabin fireside, one day, with a rosary over which he began to mumble, one eye on Narcissa.

Narcissa, at the moment he began his bead telling, was alone in the house at work on her Cayuse primer. She laid down her pen, opened the door, and said to Umtippe:

"Take those things out of this house!"

The Cayuse grinned maliciously and continued to jerk the rosary through his fingers. The sight angered Narcissa

more than she dared let herself realize. It was a narrow age. To Narcissa, that pitiful figure of Christ, dangling from the savage's dirty fingers was not the Christ to whom she prayed. It was an idol, belonging to an ignorant and cruel sect, a sect whose priests were dooming countless heathen converts to eternal fire, whose priests were doing their utmost to wreck the mission.

Narcissa bent over the crouching chief. "Go!" she said.

He looked up into her eyes and saw there again the anger that he feared, yet hoped to rouse. He rose obediently, but said:

"I shall come every day with this. It is strong medicine. The King George priest said so."

"If you bring it in again, you shall play no more with the little White Cayuse."

"I shall bring it. See how beautiful it is? That white man on the crossed sticks paid for what the Protestants did to Indians."

The flames of long repressed and deep-seated resentment suddenly flared, and Narcissa snatched the rosary and flung it into the fire.

Umtippe looked at her in speechless anger, then with a swing of his long arm, he swept the manuscript of her Cayuse primer into the flames and fled.

The fire was a huge one. Narcissa attempted to rescue the precious sheets, but could not. She wrung her hands and stood with tear-blinded eyes watching the flames devour over a year's work. And as she stood, fighting for self-control, she observed that the little carved figure on the cross, apparently unharmed by the flames that devoured her manuscript, had assumed a red tone, as if it glowed with life. And it seemed to her that the figure writhed on the cross in a new agony.

With a groan, Narcissa thrust her hand among the flames and jerked the crucifix out upon the hearth. Then, heed-

less of her scorched fingers, she stared at the tiny symbol, while a strange thought swept into her heart. It was Jesus, then, Jesus of Bethlehem and Nazareth, and she had cast him into the flames! That priest at Fort Walla Walla loved Him as she did. What blasphemies were both she and Père Demers committing? How were they better than the zealots of old who committed atrocities in His name? For had not this unseemly contention over the conversion of Indians gone to such length that there was murder in their hearts? Had she not thought that death, in the waters of the Columbia, would be a just end for the priest? How was she better than Père Demers who prayed for the death of Protestant missionaries?

Again Narcissa groaned and, stooping, raised the now blackened Christ and placed Him on the mantel.

She was still standing before It, in deepest perturbation, when Marcus came in, bringing Pierre Pambrun, on one of his rare visits. Both men exclaimed over the crucifix. Narcissa told of the incident just finished.

Marcus flushed, angrily. "Oh, that's a terrible pity, Narcissa! You had the book almost ready to send to O-ahu for printing. Umtippe is getting to be too much."

Pambrun stared at the crucifix and moved his shoulders uneasily.

"It was a still more terrible thing Madam Whitman did. I—I am very sorry she did that. I don't know how to explain it to you because you are not Catholic. But I'm afraid— I wish she hadn't done it!"

Narcissa looked from the doctor to the factor, but all she said was, "I am a very faulty person.—Marcus, will you call Sarah in, to help me with supper?"

"First dispose of that heretic thing, Narcissa!" exclaimed Marcus.

"Please, no!" Narcissa held a protesting hand before the

little figure. "Not until I have made myself see things clearly."

"I can't stay in the room with that," said Marcus slowly.

Narcissa took the crucifix from the mantel, wrapped it tenderly in a handkerchief and carried it into the lean-to.

When she came back, she set about getting supper and the matter of the crucifix was not mentioned again.

"Well! I brought mail," exclaimed Pambrun, as they sat at the table, "and almost forgot it. No, I'm sorry, Madam Whitman, not for you, but for your *bonne*."

He handed a letter to Sarah, who looked up, astonished, from her plate of stew. She opened it and stared at the signature, then blushed furiously.

"From Miles Goodyear!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Madam Whitman, I don't have to read it aloud, do I?"

"No," said Narcissa, with a smile, "but I hope you'll tell us any news it may contain that would interest us."

Pambrun laughed. "So that's the way the wind blows!" he said, as Sarah ran with her letter into the lean-to. "I wonder what Governor Simpson would say?"

"One letter doesn't make a love affair!" suggested Narcissa.

"Out in this country, where pretty girls are so very rare, it well may." Pambrun nodded wisely. "Miles Goodyear is a promising young man. The Governor has plans for him."

"What kind of plans?" asked Marcus, bluntly.

Pambrun chuckled. "How can one say? One thing is probable: Miles will become a British subject. He talks like one now!"

Narcissa eyed the Frenchman, speculatively, but left the conversation to Marcus. She was very fond of Pambrun and of his wife. Had he not been an employee of the

Hudson's Bay Company, she would have had entire confidence in his friendship. But she did not believe that Pambrun ever relinquished his hope of making them fellow employees or, failing that, that he would not use every indirect method to drive them from the country. She was certain that he was directing Père Demers. Yet she was certain, too, that the factor had an affectionate admiration for both Marcus and herself. Only once had she voiced her suspicions of Pambrun to the doctor. She had received, in return, a sharp reprimand. Marcus was wholly devoted to the charming Frenchman.

The two men did not linger long over Miles. By the time supper was finished, they were deep in a discussion of horse raising. Marcus had acquired a herd of nearly fifty Indian ponies in exchange with the Cayuse for grain and potatoes. The mission was assuming a position of solid substance in the country that Narcissa thought must make the Hudson's Bay Company uneasy. From many angles, she believed it would have been wiser for Waii-lat-pu to hold a minimum of property. But Marcus disagreed with her, and Narcissa was living up to her early promise that he alone should dictate the mission policies. After all, she frequently told herself, it was very human and therefore forgivable that Marcus, the born pioneer, should deceive himself into thinking that his hunger for land and animals was for the sake of God alone! When her evening tasks were finished, Narcissa went in search of Sarah.

Sarah had lighted a fire in the lean-to and was kneeling before the flames, Miles' letter in her hand. She looked up at Narcissa, with such a depth of sweetness in her fine gray eyes, such smoldering warmth, that the older woman's heart went out to her in pity and tenderness. What if it were Alice Clarissa gazing up at her, so!

She stooped and kissed the young girl. "Dear Sarah, it's good to see happiness in your eyes again!"

Sarah impulsively held out her letter. "You read it, Madam Whitman. You'll understand."

Narcissa took the single sheet:

"Norway House, Rupert's Land,
February 10, 1839.

DEAR LITTLE SARAH:

I reached here, by dog cariole, after a very hard trip. I frosted my cheeks so many times that I lost count. I froze both feet. But I got here. I'm waiting for the Governor to reach here in early spring. I just read 'The Lady of the Lake' and it made me think of you. You are just as sweet and good as she was. I wish you were here now and we could read it through together. When I come to Waii-lat-pu again, I'll bring it to you.

I planned to write you a long letter but Gaston is going to leave now as he fears another snowstorm. Please give my kind remembrances to the doctor and Mrs. Whitman and kiss the baby for me.

I am, dearest Sarah, very respectfully,
Your o'b'd't servant,
MILES GOODYEAR.
Courier extraordinary to the Governor of Rupert's Land."

Narcissa returned the missive. "It's a dear letter, Sarah. How Miles does improve! That might have been written by an educated person."

"Miles is educated!" returned Sarah, proudly. "The Governor makes him read and write all he has time for. The Governor's secretary is his teacher."

"Miles didn't tell me that," said Narcissa, turning to the little table, whither she had moved such notes on her primer as had escaped Umtippe.

She lighted a candle and stood gazing down at the notebook, sadly. It seemed to her that she never could do again

the work to which she had given so many hours of enthusiastic labor. And yet, had the Indian's devastating hand rendered her efforts more futile, than they would have been, had she been permitted to print the book and put it into her Indian schoolroom? She dared not allow herself to continue that line of speculation! Instead she set her lips firmly, opened the note-book she had filled, before Alice Clarissa's birth, and took up her quill pen.

Shortly after sunrise, the following morning, Pambrun finished his breakfast and, followed by the entire family, including the waddling Trapper, went out to the corral for his horse.

Marcus eyed the sorrel bronco with disapproval. "I don't see why you always choose a half crazy brute like that, Pambrun! It took me twenty minutes to saddle him."

The factor laughed. "You don't seem to recall, doctor, that my only claim to fame rests on my ability to ride anything! Look! A man bet me yesterday, that I could not ride this beast. He does a certain double buck: up, then forward and back. Me! I take the bet, saddle the horse, ride him twenty-five miles to Waii-lat-pu. Now, I shall ride him back to the fort and win my bet."

He leaped like a flash into the saddle. The horse ran perhaps fifty yards, then suddenly bucked, the terrible double buck, which is the dread of any save a daredevil horseman like Pambrun. He clung to his seat with knee and spur and waved his cap at the group in the dooryard. The gesture maddened the horse. He bucked and reared. Pambrun, at the instant, essayed a bow to Narcissa and the backward plunge threw the pummel violently into his stomach. He collapsed on the bronco's neck and, with diabolical cunning, the beast rolled with him.

Marcus, with half a dozen Indians, ran to the factor's help. It was several moments before they could bring the

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frenzied horse to its feet, leaving the factor doubled up in the sand. Marcus bent over him and it seemed a long, long time to Narcissa before he straightened himself and said, with stiffened lips:

"He's gone!"

No one spoke. Narcissa gazed, in horror, on the crumpled body. Alice Clarissa clung to her mother's skirts and Sarah Hall sobbed.

"He's gone!" repeated the doctor, "and we've lost our best friend on the Columbia! Perhaps our only friend!" White to the lips, he picked up the factor's gun and motioned the Indians to lead the plunging horse behind the rye stack, in the corral. A moment later a shot rang out. Marcus came back and laid the gun on the ground beside the body.

Narcissa stared with sick eyes from her husband to the grim faces of the Cayuse gathered about. Then with a shuddering sigh, she said, "I will write a letter to Madam Pambrun, if you will find an Indian to deliver it."

Shortly, a Cayuse, with the death message in his tobacco pouch, galloped westward on the trail.

About two hours later Marcus was ready to start to the fort with the body. He had rolled it in blankets and lashed it to two stout poles. With the help of the Indians, he then had lashed the poles to the saddles of two ponies, so that the body was carried, tandem fashion, between them. The forward horse was ridden by Umtippe and the rear horse by Marcus. Narcissa, with Alice Clarissa in her lap, rode her own horse, Columbia, while Sarah Hall bestrode a little white mare that the doctor had given her, the year before. Thus the sad procession started.

It was midnight before they reached the fort. Torches were burning at the open gates, about which were gathered several silent groups of Walla Wallapoos, who, as the slow

moving little funeral procession came within the uncertain light, began the death chant. Pambrun had been liked and trusted by the Indians.

The handful of white and half-breed employees of the fort took the body in charge. As they carried it into the Pambrun house, Madam Pambrun, with a long scream, threw herself into Narcissa's arms. The poor little soul was beside herself with grief. Narcissa bade Marcus take Alice Clarissa and Sarah off to bed, while she gave her whole attention to the new-made widow.

It was a long and difficult night during which neither woman slept, but by breakfast time Madam Pambrun was sufficiently calm to see Père Demers and to listen to the plans for the funeral.

The services were held that afternoon. The grave was dug within the fort enclosure, for wolves and Indians made an unprotected grave a horror. A group of white-gowned Indian boys, perfectly trained, assisted Père Demers in the burial service, which Narcissa's artist soul pronounced exquisite. She and Marcus stood, alien, on the outskirts of the little crowd, watching the strange ceremonies with a curiosity that their very sincere grief could not smother.

And although every prejudice that early training and environment could produce urged Narcissa to disdain and dislike the solemn chants, the swing of the censers, the deep voice of the priest, uttering the sacred promises, it was impossible for her not to be profoundly moved. For there accompanied every word and note that fell upon her ear, the vivid memory of the wretched episode of two days before; that living, writhing figure of the Christ, that sudden sense of remorse, that new understanding of the unity of all Christian faiths. Every prejudice that Narcissa possessed melted before this memory; and her tears were not alone for Pambrun, too soon withdrawn from life, but for that wanton waste of Christ's heritage which she and

Marcus, with Père Demers, were increasing with every hour of strife.

When at last the grave had been filled, Madame Pambrun clung to Narcissa and begged to go back with her, to Waii-lat-pu. Père Demers, dignified and coldly polite to the Whitmans, gentle and tender as a woman to Madam Pambrun, would not listen to her plea. She must follow the Hudson's Bay Company custom, he said. She must go, at once, to Fort Vancouver, where she would be pensioned and her children cared for. It was a sane decision and, at last, the weeping little widow agreed to it.

So Narcissa spent the remainder of the afternoon visiting with Madam Pambrun, Pierre's favorite haunts. His garden, his log seat in the clump of willows near the boat landing, and his bench atop one of the bastions from which one could see the glory of Mount Hood, the Columbia rushing westward, the vast lift and roll of the plains, and the mighty wall of the Blue Mountains pressing down upon them from the east.

Death, thought Narcissa, as she gazed from the bastion top, was almost unendurably solemn, almost unbelievably natural, in the midst of the immense loneliness in which their lives were set.

They started, at dawn, for Waii-lat-pu and reached the cabin at sunset. Here they were greeted by Trapper's yapping and by two forlorn figures, a man and a woman, crouched on the doorstep. They rose and stood like culprits, as Narcissa, leaving Marcus in the corral with the horses, advanced to investigate. They were white people, emaciated and ragged. The man, with hollow cheeks and burning, protruding brown eyes, above a sparse brown beard, wore the remains of a frock coat above torn leather trousers. The woman, once, might have been pretty, but she was so thin, so worn, her hair so faded by the sun, her skin so parched and burned, that she was almost ugly.

"Our name is Munger," said the man, "Asahel and Mary Munger. We come from Ohio. We are independent missionaries on our way to the Sandwich Islands. It's been pretty hard on the trail. Harder than we expected. Our horses died up there, on the Blue Mountains, and our money's given out. We thought you might let us rest here for a spell. I see you are putting up a house. I'm a carpenter, like our Lord Jesus, praise Him and hallelujah! Also, my wife is a good cook."

"Come in!" exclaimed Narcissa. "We have plenty of work here for willing hands and you are more than welcome."

The woman followed Narcissa into the cabin. The table was set and a stew of some sort bubbled on the fire. "I ain't eaten anything yet," said Mrs. Munger. "One of the Indian women said you'd be back to-night and I got things ready. I hope I wasn't presuming."

"I'm only too much pleased! You and your husband can move into one of the lodges we put up for our last visitors. Sarah, please give Alice Clarissa her supper and put her to bed!"

The woman's worn face twitched. "Praise God!" she whispered. "I feel like the children of Israel when they finally got out of the wilderness."

Narcissa smiled and called Marcus and Munger in to supper. She was very tired after the three days of mental as well as physical strain and desired nothing quite so much as to go to bed. But, shortly after the Mungers had gone to their tent, Umtippe appeared. Narcissa gathered herself together for the usual battle of wills, but, to her surprise, Marcus motioned her to silence while he rose to shake a sturdy finger in the chief's face.

"If you ever bring one of those rosaries in here, again," he said sternly, "I'll burn it, as my wife did. And I shall tell the Kitchie Okema, when he comes of your burning

my wife's paper talk. We'll see what he has to say to you! Narcissa, get that crucifix and give it to Umtippe."

Narcissa hesitated. Then she brought the blackened Christus from her room and gave it to Marcus. He took it gingerly and held it out to Umtippe. The Cayuse struck at it with horror in his eyes and backed toward the door.

"No!" he shouted. "The King George man said if we harmed it, our hands would rot. Don't touch me with it!"

"Take it!" roared Marcus. "Take your symbol of heresy out of my house!" He tossed the crucifix at Umtippe's protesting hands.

The crucifix struck one of them and fell to the floor. Umtippe howled with fear and rushed from the house. Narcissa lifted the crucifix and put it back in her closet. Marcus followed her into the lean-to. He watched her lay the little figure away, resentfully. "Why do you keep it, Narcissa?" he asked.

"I'm going to give it to Père Demers some day," she replied.

"You think I'm a clumsy handed fool, don't you!" exclaimed Marcus.

"No, I don't think anything of the sort," returned Narcissa. "I was dreading the scene I knew was impending between Umtippe and me. And you've taken the brunt of it. I'm grateful, Marcus."

"That's not what I mean," insisted Marcus. "It's all the time. You draw more and more into yourself. You wouldn't tell me why you wanted to keep that graven image. You felt I'd be too thick-headed to understand. You wouldn't let me handle Miles and Sarah, that night. Oh, I could give a hundred instances! and the bitterest part of it is, I guess you're right!"

Marcus was sitting on the edge of the bed, pulling off

his high boots. In the flickering candlelight he was an uncouth, unkempt figure in worn trapper's clothing.

"I'd give all my chance of success with the Indians," he went on huskily, "to feel that I deserved your respect. I bamboozled you, that first day we came out here, into letting me be boss. You're such a thoroughbred, you've lived up to the agreement. But I can tell you my authority is dust and ashes in my mouth."

Narcissa, her hair in long braids, came over to him and knelt at his knee.

"Dear Marcus," she said, "if I had half your simple fineness, I'd be more worthy of you. You have all my trust and you have my deep affection. Will that not satisfy you?"

Marcus put his great hand on her head. "Some day I hope to do so big a thing, that you'll give me your heart. That's the day I live for. . . . God keep you for me, my dear, dear wife!"

For a long moment there was no sound in the cabin, but a lone wolf howled almost beneath the window.

The Mungers settled down at the mission with great content. Munger was a skilled workman, and the new house progressed so rapidly that, by June, the Whitmans were settled in it. The building was commodious, put up in the form of a T. At the south end of the cross to the T was the family bedroom, at its north end, the Indian room, both twenty feet square. Between the two lay the parlor and dining-room. The first room in the stem of the T, connecting with the dining-room, was the kitchen, and strung beyond this a servants' room, a dormitory room for pupils, a storeroom and a henhouse.

On the first Sunday in June they held service in the Indian room, and Alice Clarissa electrified the Indians by singing "Rock of Ages." But when she had finished, the congregation could scarcely wait for Marcus to read

his sermon, so eager were its members to examine the new furnishings of the house, completed only the day before. They made for the dining-room, before he had finished the closing prayer. Narcissa had locked her own room and she prayed that Umtippe would not break the latch.

Marcus glanced at her flushed cheeks. "Let them look their fill and be through with it," he suggested.

Narcissa bit her lips. "It's not as if they hadn't watched every adobe put in place. They do it just to annoy us. But we must say nothing, particularly to Umtippe." Then she added with a sudden laugh, "I must try not to offend the head of the Cayuse Catholic party!"

Marcus snorted. "He's about as much of a Catholic as I am!"

Narcissa's lips stiffened. "I shall save him to Protestantism if I do nothing else at Waii-lat-pu."

"Well, I believe you can," declared the doctor. "That is, if you go at it right. If you—"

He was interrupted by a tearful call from Mrs. Munger. "If you folks think I can cook a meal of victuals with twenty stinking Indians sitting on the floor by the stove, you're wrong! That's all!"

Marcus laughed, groaned, and went to Mrs. Munger's rescue. By cajolery and joking, he managed to clear the kitchen, and not long after, the family sat down to dinner. Even then, several bronze faces pressed against each window and the Mungers, still unhardened to this espionage, declared that they could not eat until the curtains were drawn. Munger was a particularly high-strung man and he insisted that these were the eyes of Satan and his cohorts. To the great amusement of Sarah Hall, he prayed loudly, at intervals, throughout the meal. He was, in fact, in the midst of his loudest effort, when a knocking at the door announced white callers. Marcus threw the door wide. Henry and Eliza Spalding were standing on the steps!

"I know we should not be traveling on the Sabbath!" were Mrs. Spalding's first words. "But Henry would have it that another night's camping would be my death."

"Are you ill?" cried Narcissa. "Oh, you poor soul! The doctor must help you!" She led her to a seat, then turned to Henry Spalding and silently offered him her hand. He was a little more gaunt and shriveled than ever.

"I trust you are well, Sister Whitman," he said. "My dear wife has an affliction of the bowels and we want to see your new house."

Even when he was most irritating, Henry amused Narcissa. She felt her lips twitching now.

"We plan to use the old cabin for our guest house," she said, hastily, "and I'll take Eliza over there to rest, after the doctor has examined her. Where is your baby?"

"I left her with Brother and Sister Gray." Mrs. Spalding lay back in her chair, with a sigh of relief.

Narcissa introduced the Mungers and very firmly pushed out of the door several squaws who had followed the Spaldings in.

"They don't bother me!" protested Mrs. Spalding.

"They do me!" exclaimed Mrs. Munger. "They drive me crazy, under foot every minute."

"We don't try to shut them out at Lap-wai," said Mrs. Spalding. "After all, we have nothing to hide from the Lord or the Indians either."

"From the Lord, no!" returned Narcissa. "But from the Indians, many, many times! I shall struggle for privacy from the Indians as long as I live among them."

Henry Spalding opened his mouth to speak, but his wife forestalled him. "We were distressed to hear of Mr. Pambrun's death," she said.

"The Lord was making way for a Protestant at Walla Walla, perhaps," said Spalding, his mouth now full of beef. "You have a wonderful house here, doctor. I don't see how

you can afford it. We still live in our original cabin. All that we have accumulated we have used for the benefit of the Indians."

Marcus, who was sitting with Alice Clarissa on one knee and young Trapper on the other, spoke firmly. "Well, we felt it would be for the general good if we had decent accommodations. Our location is different from yours. You are isolated, while we are on what will soon be an immigrant trail to the Columbia."

"Still harping on that old string?" cried Spalding. "Let me warn you that, in another ten years, the Hudson's Bay Company will have so tightened its hold on this section that an American can't get in. I'm as well pleased. We'll have that much less to distract us from the Indians."

Marcus gave his guest a curious glance, but went on, with a certain set look on his long jaw. "Our conversions so far have not been as many as yours, but we have made progress in many directions. The young men have fifty acres under cultivation. I grind a great deal of corn and wheat for them and we support several fatherless families. Narcissa averages sixty squaws in her mothers' classes and, as a consequence, our infant mortality is less by half than what it was when we came. We have a hundred pupils in the school and it's astounding, the progress Narcissa has made teaching them English and Bible stories. We are, moreover, a tavern to all the trappers, missionaries and whatnot that pass this way."

"Also, a free hospital!" said Mrs. Munger, who had been eyeing Henry Spalding, with obvious dislike, ever since his arrival.

Marcus ignored the interruption and continued. "As far as the house is concerned, every square foot of it will add to the efficiency of our help to the Indians. I've written to the American Board asking them to send us a couple of young men, sort of apprentice missionaries, who can do the

work away from Waii-lat-pu that I've been trying to do. This following of the Indians over the country, camas digging, salmon fishing, buffalo hunting, trying to convert them on the wing, is killing work. I could manage, had I no call on my time other than mission work, like you. But, after all, you mustn't forget that I'm a physician and that my patients are located anywhere within a radius of two hundred miles."

"Have you heard from the Board since your request?" demanded Spalding.

Marcus shook his head. "I think I shall, though. I'm doing all I can to make the Board see the danger of this country going Catholic."

"It won't go Catholic," said Munger. "I'll offer myself as a living sacrifice to prevent that."

"You look like a sick man to me, Mr. Munger!" exclaimed Mrs. Spalding, her eyes on the carpenter's pale face.

"He is sick!" declared Mrs. Munger, who, in order to miss nothing, was washing the dishes on the dining-room table. "We are on the way to the Sandwich Islands for his health."

Marcus gave his sudden hearty laugh, but sobered, quickly, as Munger cried vehemently, "We are going to the Sandwich Islands to serve Christ and the heathen. I'm not at all sick."

"You'd be lying in your grave, by the Walla Walla, if Dr. Whitman hadn't took you in and dosed you," contradicted his wife. "Mrs. Whitman, there's some one at your door."

"I thought we'd had peace as long as we could hope for it," said Narcissa. "Let's all go into the Indian room while the doctor prescribes for Mrs. Spalding."

The school benches were filled with Indians, laughing, telling stories, smoking and scratching fleas. Narcissa stepped to the door and called to Umtippe, who was sullenly applying his moccasined toe, to the door of the parlor. He stalked into the Indian room.

"Where is the doctor?" he demanded.

"With Mrs. Spalding, who is sick," replied Narcissa. "What do you want, Umtippe?"

Umtippe grunted and started for the door into the dining-room. Narcissa barred the way.

"The doctor will be out in a moment, Umtippe. You mustn't disturb him now."

"My wife won't want any trouble on her account," said Spalding, hastily.

"There will be none!" Narcissa smiled at the old chief. "Do sit down and wait, Umtippe."

The old chief stared at the white woman for a moment, then sat slowly down on a school bench. Alice Clarissa, who had been playing a game of tag around the benches with several of the young Cayuse, now established herself between Umtippe's knees, daring any one to molest her. Umtippe looked down at her with the smile that gave his face a curious charm.

Marcus was not long in making his appearance. Spalding gave him an anxious look. "Your wife is not seriously ill," the doctor assured him. "She's been working too hard and her digestion is very bad. She needs nursing and rest. Better leave her here for a few weeks and let Narcissa take care of her."

Before Spalding could reply, Umtippe put Alice Clarissa aside and advanced to face the doctor. Marcus, leaning against the teacher's desk, his great shoulders drooping wearily, smiled at the old chief.

"Now what, Umtippe?"

"Why are you poisoning my people?" demanded the chief.

There was a sudden silence in the schoolroom. Alice Clarissa clung to her mother's skirts, sensing one of the dreaded scenes she had witnessed so often between her parents and the old Indian she loved so dearly.

"I'm not poisoning your people, Umtippe! Who says I am?" Marcus' voice was sharp.

"I say you are. The King George priest at Fort Walla Walla says white doctors poison many people."

"I don't believe he said any such thing," declared Marcus. "He's no fool. Why should I want to poison your people?"

"If you can get rid of us old ones, you can bend to your own wishes those young fools who talk of going over to your God. You will try to take all our land, then. But not as long as I live shall you have Waii-lat-pu for your own." Umtippe's bronze face was literally black with rage. The corners of his mouth drew back into his wrinkled cheeks, showing long, brown teeth like an old dog's.

"Umtippe, the only poison I know about is some I put in a rotten buffalo carcass, last winter, to kill wolves. The sickness that's affecting your people again is the same as you had two years ago. You old folks gorge too heavily on camas."

"You lie!" snarled the Indian. He lifted a lean fist from beneath his robe and struck the doctor on the chest.

The other Indians in the room were motionless. Alice Clarissa screamed. Munger and Spalding half rose from their places, but Marcus waved them back.

"Let's see if I can't manage this," he said.

He stood, cheeks flushed, but staring coolly at the frenzied chief. Umtippe struck him on the left cheek. With a curious set smile, Marcus turned the other. This, also, Umtippe struck, then paused a moment while the doctor turned the left cheek to him.

"Poisoner!" grunted the Cayuse, and struck again.

"Marcus! I can't bear this!" cried Narcissa.

Mr. Spalding groaned softly, but there was an expression not unlike gloating in his brown eyes. Mr. Munger repeated over and over the same prayer:

"Oh, Jesus Christ! Help Thy servant who turns the other cheek! Oh, Jesus Christ! Let his punishment be for all of us! Smite no further, Lord!"

Marcus turned his right cheek. Umtippe called him a foul name and struck the purpled cheek bone. Tears of physical pain were in the doctor's deepset blue eyes, but he did not flinch nor turn his steady gaze from the chief. His non-resistance maddened Umtippe. He jumped up and down. "Get off my land! Get off my land! Agree to get off my land or I shall call my war chief and kill you all!"

"Father! Father!" screamed Alice Clarissa. "Stop, Umtippe! Stop!"

Young Trapper, at the sound of his little mistress' agony, ran out from beneath the bench, caught Umtippe's moccasin flap in his teeth and worried it. Narcissa gathered the little girl in her arms and whispered:

"Sing with mother, baby! Sing! We'll make Umtippe listen.

"'Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock!
If the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
Down will come rock-a-by, baby, and all.'"

The child's piercingly sweet treble rose above Narcissa's soft humming. Umtippe's long brown hand, raised to strike, as the first note sounded, remained motionless in the air for a moment, then dropped to his side. He turned slowly to look at Alice Clarissa. She was clinging to her mother, her little chin trembling while the brave and beautiful notes rippled from her baby lips. The lullaby had been finished for the third time when Umtippe held out his arms to the child.

"Come to me, little White Cayuse!"

Narcissa held Alice Clarissa firmly on her knee and said, as quietly as though nothing had happened:

"Is any of your family sick, Umtippe?"

"My wife," replied Umtippe, sulkily.

"The doctor will cure her," said Narcissa. "Let him go to your lodge with you."

"Let him bring the little White Cayuse," commanded the chief, "then if he makes my wife die, I'll keep the child."

"I shall not go one step under those conditions, Umtippe!" cried Marcus. "You know that you can't scare me or bully me. And I know that you are taking presents from the priests and have promised to get rid of us. Umtippe, I'll make conditions now. You want us to leave Waii-lat-pu. We will do so if you wish us to, but we will leave the land as we found it. You gave us the land, voluntarily. If you, a great chief, want to stoop so low as to take it back, we will return it to you. But it will return the desert we found it. We shall burn the crops, the fences, the mill, the blacksmith shop, the tools, the cabin, this house, and all that they contain. We shall leave you, as you desire, taking back with us the little White Cayuse."

"And God will hold you accountable for what you have done," added Narcissa clearly.

Umtippe glowered at her. "Don't say that to me again, woman!"

"It's true!" insisted Narcissa. "God does not forget."

Umtippe jerked his robe to his chin with a gesture that would have done credit to one of Narcissa's dramatic moments and strode toward the door. But Marcus was before him.

"Stop, Umtippe! Tell us! Do we go or stay?"

"What will you give me if I say stay?" demanded the old Indian.

"If you say it over the pipe with me, I'll cure your wife," replied the doctor.

Umtippe grunted, "Stay!" and slowly pulled a pipe from his belt. It was a red clay, elaborately feathered. Marcus

filled it, took a deep pull and, amidst deep silence, handed it to the chief. Umtippe drew a long, slow whiff, then emptied the pipe on the floor and left the house abruptly. Marcus, with a little nod at the others, followed him.

"Well," said Henry Spalding in a flat voice, as he followed Narcissa into the dining-room, "I guess that point is settled."

"You have greater confidence in Umtippe's word than I have!" Narcissa gave Alice Clarissa her rag doll and looked from the preacher to his wife, who, she knew, had witnessed the scene through the open door.

"You look as if you'd been in a war, Sister Whitman!" exclaimed Mrs. Spalding. "You are no more fit for this life than I am to sing an operatic song."

"That's true!" cried Spalding.

"I'm well aware of the opinions and desires you hold in regard to us and Waii-lat-pu!" Narcissa's voice was low and unruffled, but something in its quality caused Eliza to look at her curiously, while Henry Spalding reddened. "Eliza," Narcissa went on, "if you feel well enough, we'll go over to the cabin now and I'll try to make you comfortable."

CHAPTER XIV

THE GRAVE UNDER THE COTTONWOODS

NARCISSA returned from caring for the invalid to find Marcus alone in the dining-room, Sarah Hall having removed Alice Clarissa and Trapper to the door-yard. The doctor was leaning back, wearily, in a buffalo-hide covered chair.

"Umtippe's squaw will be all right in a day or so," he said.

Narcissa sat down opposite him and the two gave each other a long look, then Narcissa said, "Let me bathe your poor cheeks with cold water."

Marcus shook his head. "They'll do as they are, thank you! Too sore to touch, so I have an excuse for not shaving!"

Narcissa laughed, with her eyes full of tears. Then she said suddenly, "Eliza says she had mail from home last week. They sent a Nez Percé runner up to meet the spring boat brigade at Kootenay. I wish we'd thought to do that."

"I wish we had," agreed Marcus. "But, according to that, the boats should reach Fort Walla Walla any time now. I'll send in, to-morrow."

But Marcus was not obliged to send a messenger. That night, after they had gone to bed, a horse trotted across the dooryard and a hand fumbled at the latch. Marcus lighted a candle and opened the door. An Indian handed him an oilskin-wrapped packet.

"Mail," he said in Cayuse. "The factor at Fort Walla Walla said you'd give me double pay for bringing it quick."

Marcus handed the packet to Narcissa and measured off

a double portion of rope tobacco, which the Indian received with a grunt of satisfaction. The doctor latched the door and turned to Narcissa. She was sitting up in bed, holding an unopened letter in her shaking hand, her face white to the lips.

"It's in my sister's handwriting," she whispered. "I'm afraid to open it lest it tell me Father and Mother are gone!"

"Let me read it for you, dear," said Marcus. He broke the seal and disclosed three letters. "One is signed, 'Father,' one, 'Mother,' and one, 'Jane'! Will that satisfy you, little pig?"

He handed the letters to his wife. She clasped them to her lips and burst into tears. Marcus, his own face working, patted her with one hand while with the other he ran through the remaining letters.

"Three from the American Board," he said quietly.

His words stopped Narcissa's sobs. She wiped her eyes and smiled. "Let's read those from the Board first and learn the worst that Henry Spalding has done for us. Now that I know that Father and Mother are still living and loving me, I can bear anything."

Marcus read the letters aloud. The first was concerned entirely with the temporal work of the mission, giving directions that had been carried out long before. The second, after discussion of business details, spoke of having received letters nearly two years old both from Waii-lat-pu and Lap-wai and warned the missionaries at Waii-lat-pu not to allow either secular or personal interests to influence the work of the mission. The third was a terse note asking Marcus to explain the continued lack of converts and warning him that, unless a better spirit was shown by him and his wife, the mission would be closed.

Marcus laid the letters beside the candle and looked at Narcissa. "I'm going to go over to the cabin, with that last letter, right now," he said, his voice thick with anger.

"We will show them the letters, yes," agreed Narcissa. "But I want you to have full control of yourself, first. You are hasty when you are angry. Wait until morning, Marcus."

The doctor paced the floor with a blanket wrapped round him, for the nights were cool, and Narcissa followed him, anxiously, with her eyes. Finally, as he caught the troubled look in her blue gaze, he sat down on the bed, saying quietly:

"Read me your letters, dear. I'll wait until morning."

The letters were packed with all the home news for which Narcissa had been hungering. It was evident that earlier packets of letters had been sent but had been lost. But, with these riches at hand, Narcissa wasted no thought on lost mails. She devoured those at hand as if half famished. They were long letters and the roosters were crowing before the two desisted from re-reading and discussing them and composed themselves for a short sleep.

The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, Marcus requested the Spaldings to join him and Narcissa in the parlor. There, he latched the doors and read aloud the letters from the Board. Spalding scarcely waited for Marcus to finish before he cried, angrily:

"What do they mean by such insinuations?"

"That's the question I propose to ask you," replied Marcus, sternly.

"Why of me? I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you?" asked Marcus. "Let me tell you then, Spalding, that they mean that you are a first-class preacher, but a treacherous friend."

"Careful, Marcus!" murmured Narcissa.

Marcus, his clean-shaven face showing the bruises from Umtippe's fists, folded his arms across his chest in Umtippe's own attitude. "Tell them about Pambrun, Narcissa," he said. "I am afraid of my own indignation."

Narcissa obeyed. During her recital, Eliza's face began to burn and her eyes turned angrily toward her husband. And when the story was finished, she gave Spalding no chance to explain:

"Henry," she exclaimed, "jealousy is your besetting sin! It's led you out of the path of righteousness many times and here is another sample of it!"

"Where's your wifely faith in me?" demanded the preacher.

"I have a great deal left, even after this," replied Mrs. Spalding. "Even though you've been making a quiet fool of yourself and got caught."

Spalding's voice rose, half hysterically. "This is a gross misreading of my purpose. I resent—"

"Henry, I have something to say to you." It was Narcissa who interrupted him. She was sitting beside the crude table, her work-roughened hands clasped over a hymn book, her Madonna face flushed and her tender lips set. "I want to speak before your wife and my husband, although Marcus already knows. Long ago you did me the honor to ask me to marry you. I had the friendliest feeling for you, but I did not love you, and I told you so. You appeared to acquiesce in my decision, without bitterness. But you will recall that, on the night in Angelica that Marcus told you of our engagement, you showed unwarranted resentment. And ever since, you have treated me with hostility. Henry Spalding, is this your idea of Christianity?"

Eliza Spalding, holding an aching forehead as she listened, made an inarticulate murmur as of sudden understanding.

"So that's it!" she cried. "More jealousy!" Her plain, rather heavy face was lighted by a look of great intelligence she cast at Narcissa. "I'm certainly obliged to you for this explanation. Can't say I blame Henry for wanting to marry you, but since he couldn't—" She turned

abruptly to her husband. "Since she didn't want you, you're acting like pretty small potatoes, I must say! And I must say," she added, her comfortable voice carrying an unwonted note of pain, "I'm not particularly set up to learn that I was taken on the rebound."

"You've had love and honor from me ever since I married you!" shouted Spalding.

"I'd never have told you this, Eliza," said Narcissa, "if Henry's treachery hadn't driven me to it. That made me feel that you must understand matters so that you could control him."

"I'll control him, all right." Eliza Spalding's eyes were not without a certain vindictive light. "Henry, either you or I sit down at this table now and write to the Board, telling them of our failure to convert a single Cayuse and explaining that through this, we've discovered that your criticisms of the Whitmans were unjust. Come now, who does it, you or I?"

"I'll not do it," declared Spalding. "I'm just as much convinced as I ever was that the Whitmans are not fitted for this work. You've said as much, yourself."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" sniffed Mrs. Spalding. "My breakfast is hurting me so, it's hard for me to laugh at you, Henry. But that's what I ought to do. I've said that the doctor was no preacher and that Mrs. Whitman spoiled a good singer to make a poor missionary. But I love and admire them both for other things, and you know it. Who writes that letter, you or I, Henry?"

"Well, I'll write. Not because I think I ought to, but to prevent your doing so."

"Then I'll go lie down, if you'll help me, Sister Whitman."

When Narcissa returned from supporting Mrs. Spalding to bed, she found the two men glaring at each other, angrily.

"There are writing materials in the cabin, Henry," she suggested mildly.

Spalding snatched up his fur cap and bolted for the door. At the doorsill, he paused, to shout back at the two:

"I'm a fighting Christian and Eliza's for peace at any price! I'll write this letter because I have to, but that doesn't mean I shan't go on exposing your inefficiency!"

He rushed away. The doctor and Narcissa stared at each other.

"That settles it!" declared Marcus. "That fellow leaves here to-day and never comes back."

"Hush, Marcus! That's not the spirit that made you turn the other cheek to Umtippe."

"No, it's not," cried Marcus. "And I'm glad it's not! I'm your husband before I'm anything else on earth. And some day I'm going to trounce the everlasting daylights out of Henry Spalding. See if I don't!"

The Spaldings did not appear for dinner. In the afternoon, Narcissa conducted her school, as usual, while Marcus worked in the fields. An hour before supper, Narcissa settled herself in the dooryard with a book, where Marcus joined her. Alice Clarissa, with her doll and the puppy, played on the doorstep, while Sarah Hall helped Mrs. Munger in the dining-room.

Just before the meal was ready, Alice Clarissa placed her doll on the lower step, in a posture which indicated that that long-suffering individual was saying her prayers, and announced:

"Alice Clarissa help set the table now."

Narcissa nodded, absorbed in her book. A little later Sarah Hall came out.

"I'm going to the garden for radishes," she said, as Narcissa looked up and asked:

"Where is Alice Clarissa, Sarah?"

"She was here a little bit ago. I think she went to the garden to get herself some pieplant."

"Locate her, Sarah, before you do anything more,"

ordered Narcissa, always uneasy when the child was out of her sight.

Five minutes later, Sarah appeared with a bunch of radishes in her hand. "I can't find her anywhere!" she exclaimed.

At this moment Munger sauntered up. "Been washing my feet in the river," he said, "and noticed two cups floating down stream. I want to get the doctor's fishing pole and fish them out."

Narcissa had risen. "I'm going to look for the baby!" she exclaimed.

Marcus smiled. "If we had a couple more children, Narcissa, you'd go crazy with worry."

But Narcissa did not make her usual laughing rejoinder to this staple comment of her husband's. Instead, she started running toward the bank of the Walla Walla. Something in her face caused Marcus to drop his book and follow her. He even joined her call:

"Alice Clarissa! Baby! Where are you?"

No answer.

When the doctor overtook Narcissa, she was pointing to two teacups caught on a little sand bar. "Her milk and water cup! They were on the table not ten minutes ago!"

For one awful moment, they stared into each other's eyes, then Marcus turned toward the house with a great shout.

"Munger! Come and help search the river!"

Munger, his wife, Sarah Hall, a group of Indians; these rushed to the river bank. Marcus stripped to his underdrawers and plunged into the water. Old Umtippe cast off his robe and, wrinkled and gaunt in his loin-cloth, dived into the current fifty yards farther up stream. Narcissa, running in silent agony along the bank, saw Umtippe swimming under water, saw him rise for breath and sink again, saw him suddenly burrow beneath a log, then come to the

surface holding something in his arms. She made toward him, her hands outstretched, her lips dumb in her extremity. But Marcus, who had emerged from the water at the same moment as did Umtippe, was before her and he clasped Alice Clarissa to his naked heart.

He laid her on the warm sand, under the cottonwoods. Munger would have helped,—so would a dozen other pairs of hands, Indian and white,—but Narcissa would not allow any one but Marcus and herself to touch that inert little body. For an hour they sought to resuscitate her. At the end of that time, Marcus, his lips quivering, laid the little arms reverently back on the baby bosom and, looking up blindly, said:

"Lord, Thy will, not mine, be done!"

Narcissa, her face like stone, stood gazing down on the beauty that was flesh of her flesh. Sarah Hall gave one shrill scream and ran to the house. Old Umtippe, during the long hour, had stood, naked, his arms folded on his chest. He now thrust a thin, shaking forefinger into Narcissa's face.

"You have let her die!" he groaned. "The gods of the Cayuse shall punish you."

"Get out of here, Umtippe!" roared Marcus.

The Cayuse did not stir. Before her husband could make a move, Narcissa placed a finely modeled hand against the old chief's bony chest.

"You brought her to me, dead," she said. "Be satisfied!"

Her wide blue eyes, with unfathomable agony in their depths, held Umtippe's stern gaze until, with a shudder as if he feared the pain he saw, the chief jerked a buffalo robe over his shoulders and moved away.

Mrs. Spalding put her arm around Narcissa's waist. "Bring your baby to the house, Sister Whitman," she whispered, "and get her dressed."

Narcissa looked at the woman as if she spoke an un-

known tongue, but did not move. Marcus lifted Alice Clarissa and started toward the house. Henry Spalding touched Narcissa on the arm.

"She is safe in the Everlasting Rock of Ages," he said. His usually harsh voice was indescribably tender. He began to lead her gently after Marcus. "She is safe from all fear of massacre. She is safe from violation by the Indians. She is safe from the world. She was like you, of too delicate material to be subject to the ills of this mission life. She is wrapped in the Eternal Arms of Safety."

Narcissa heard him as in a dream. She allowed him to lead her to the doorstep, where she paused to pick up the rag doll, still in its posture of prayer. Then she followed Marcus into the bedroom.

Narcissa moved through the next four days without a tear, almost without a word. Her eyes were like glass, while a brilliant spot of red burned in either cheek. She was utterly weary, but could not rest. Every sense was violently stimulated. This was especially true of her hearing. When the Indians, on the night of the tragedy, began the death chant, in their camp across the river, it was as deafening to Narcissa as though it were in the next room. Sitting beside the rigid little form in her bedroom, the howl of wolves in a buffalo kill, a mile away, beat on her eardrums till they pained her. And Marcus' low groan, as he knelt, with his head buried in her lap, filled her very soul with shattering sound.

She could not weep. It was as if her too greatly disciplined mind dared not relax its guard over her soul, lest the release of the many agonies there shatter her reason. She planned the funeral, asking that the Sunday-school pupils sing "Rock of Ages," the last song she had taught the baby. She chose the spot for the grave, near the river beneath a cottonwood in plain view of her bedroom window. When Mrs. Munger asked her for something with which

to line the coffin that Munger, with clever hands and constant prayer had evolved from a packing case, Narcissa calmly ripped several breadths from the gray silk dress skirt and gave them to her. When Sarah Hall did not appear for breakfast on Monday morning, it was Narcissa who found her, weeping in the grist mill where she had spent the night. The girl's face was ghastly. Narcissa put her arms about her.

"No one is blaming you, Sarah Hall," said Narcissa gently. "Pray for us all and don't cry."

"I can't pray!" sobbed Sarah. "I'm not a Christian."

Narcissa groaned and led Sarah back to the house.

She asked Henry Spalding to conduct the funeral services. Curiously enough, his alone, of all the kindly voices about her, pierced through the ice that bound her. The man was all preacher now. He wrought with the doctor until at last Marcus could stumble back into the daily routine. During these days, Marcus existed for Narcissa only as one of the many figures that moved about the horizon of her agony. Spalding loomed always at her shoulder, unobtrusive, yet subtly sustaining.

The funeral was held on the afternoon of the fourth day. Before the services, Narcissa knelt for hours beside the little casket. Marcus was unable to draw her away so that the services might begin. At last he sent Spalding to her.

The preacher stood for a long moment looking down on the bowed golden head, then, with lips that trembled, he said, in his tender, preacher's voice:

"You must let her go, Narcissa. But you will never lose her. She is your babe for all time, unmarred and holy. Do not keep her here until her fleshly vestments become a horror to you. . . . Oh, my dear, my dear! Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it! His rod and His staff, they shall comfort thee."

Something in the man's voice gave Narcissa strength to rise and close the coffin lid.

There was a large gathering of Indians at the funeral, with no whites save those belonging to the missions and Archibald McKinlay, the factor from Fort Walla Walla. It was a beautiful day. The little coffin lay on the platform, covered by the silk flag which Marcus had unfurled at South Pass three years before. It had occurred to Narcissa that it would make the mission seem less isolated if the Stars and Stripes enwrapped the body of her baby. As for the service, she heard no sound of it, save the singing of "Rock of Ages." She did not hear the weeping of the Cayuse, or the death chant intoned defiantly by Umtippe during the sermon. Her whole sensate being had withdrawn into a sanctuary of the spirit, where her soul bade farewell to the soul of Alice Clarissa.

The Spaldings lingered after the funeral only for a day. With the mission falling back into the old routine, the rift between the two families gaped again and it was with a feeling of mutual relief that the decision for an early departure was made. There was a day or so of grief-stricken quiet, then a messenger appeared from the north. It was a Spokan Indian bringing a letter from Elkanah Walker. Mrs. Walker's accouchement was at hand and Marcus was begged to ride with all haste the hundred miles to their mission.

"I suppose I must go!" groaned Marcus.

Narcissa looked at him with burning eyes. If only she could weep! But her very soul seemed arid.

"I suppose you'll have to go," she repeated mechanically.

They were in their bedroom, where Narcissa had been resting after her morning of teaching. Marcus gazed at her with a physician's eye.

"I think you'd better go with me," he said.

"I'd rather stay here," replied Narcissa. "I want to be alone."

"You mean, that you *wish* me to go?" exclaimed Marcus.

"I'll go mad unless I can be by myself a little while," Narcissa half whispered. "The Indians, the Mungers, the Spaldings, Sarah Hall. . . . I haven't a spot in which I may grieve alone."

"I understand!" exclaimed the doctor. "Even that hound of a Spalding can be nearer you in your trouble than I can! It's well I've something to take me out of your way!"

He jerked his saddle-bags from their hooks, then stood waiting for some comment from Narcissa. But she was staring out the window at the new-made grave beneath the cottonwoods, and Marcus, white to the lips, without another word, left for his long, long journey.

The Mungers had moved into the cabin as soon as the Spaldings had left. They offered to move back to the mission house while the doctor should be away, but Narcissa refused their offer. Even Sarah Hall's presence was more than she desired.

So, Sarah and Narcissa took their supper together that night. It was a silent meal until near the end when Sarah said wistfully:

"You do *know* that our baby is in heaven, don't you, dear Madam Whitman?"

"Yes, Sarah, I do," replied Narcissa. "Why do you ask?"

"I'd rather not say why." Sarah turned to Narcissa eyes as gentle as those of Trapper, who whimpered bereft in a corner of the dining-room.

A vague remembrance of comments made by Mrs. Munger which only partially had penetrated her grief, returned to Narcissa.

"Has Mrs. Munger been saying something to bother you? Come, dear, I insist on knowing."

"The Mungers say," replied the young girl, with a little sob, "that she was old enough to be a professed Christian.

And she wasn't one. So they say she can't have gone to heaven. I want to go wherever she has gone! I don't care whether I'm with Christ or not. I've got to be with her. I was thinking, before she—she went away, that maybe I'd please you and have a change of heart. But I can't now, because Mrs. Munger says she hasn't gone to heaven."

Narcissa rose, her face ghastly. "The Mungers are fools!" she exclaimed in a voice Sarah never before had heard. "How dare they speak so of my little, innocent, holy child! How dare they!" And to Sarah's utter consternation, Narcissa put her long, roughened hands before her eyes and burst into tears.

For a moment, while the room was filled with deep-drawn sobs of agony, the young girl sat as if paralyzed. This was not the ready wail of an Indian woman over her dead, to which she was hardened. It was not like the doctor's groans, which had moved her so, nor like Mrs. Spalding's gentle tears of sympathy. There was that in this unprecedented breakdown of the calm mistress of Waii-lat-pu that, while it frightened Sarah, gave her a vague understanding of the measure of a grief so great that it could find no outlet. She endured the sound of Narcissa's tears, in silence, as long as she could. Then she threw the half-eaten slice of bread she was holding in her hand on the floor, where Trapper devoured it between whines, rushed to Narcissa's side and threw her young arms about Narcissa's neck.

"Don't! Don't! Don't!" she wailed. "I'll kill both the Mungers if they speak of it again. Only don't cry this way. It'll kill you!"

But the dam was down. Narcissa disengaged the clinging arms, and went to her bedroom.

Without thought, without desire, she wept for hours. From time to time, during the earlier part of the evening, Sarah or Mrs. Munger rapped on her door. But she

could not answer them, and finally they left her to her sorrow.

It was long after midnight when she fell asleep and long after sunrise, her usual rising time, when she woke. She lay listening dully to the sound of Indians without, and the Mungers and Sarah within the house. And she was conscious of but one desire: to see her mother; to be in Angelica again and rest her weary head against the heart that, like her lost child, was flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone.

And with this overwhelming desire was born a sudden purpose. On the next ship that left Fort Vancouver for England, she would take passage and make a visit to her mother!

She would not, she could not, go on with the futile toil of the mission until she had had time and opportunity to recover from this irreparable and inscrutable loss. A year for the journey. A year at home. Two whole years of civilization and a year of her mother's love and understanding! For the first time since the tragedy, a sense of comfort stole into Narcissa's ravished heart. She lay and dreamed of herself unlatching the gate of home and rushing up the flower-bordered path to the wide-swung door and her mother's extended arms. Home! Home!

Waii-lat-pu was home to Marcus. Never, never could it be to her. As for Marcus and this visit— Poor Marcus! But, after all, his work was absorbing. Two years would soon pass. Her old conviction that she never would return to Angelica was but an idle superstition. As soon as Marcus returned, she would break the news to him. And then, an end for two years to the heavy, detestable grind!

She suddenly found strength to rise and dress. With the dream of Angelica before her, life was endurable.

CHAPTER XV

"MALBROUCK"

THAT afternoon, Narcissa held her mothers' class as usual. There was the customary attendance of draggle-tailed squaws with their babies. Among the older children present was a newcomer, a three-year-old boy. Old Tua, the midwife, lifted the child to the desk and invited Narcissa to observe him. And habituated though she was to every form of Indian child misery, Narcissa winced with horror, as she did so.

The boy wore a loin cloth and piece of rabbit skin, about a foot square, tied over one shoulder. He was covered with filth: with scabs, bloody scales, bruises and lice. His ankles and wrists were raw and blistered. His face was so swollen from weeping that his features were all but indistinguishable.

"It's a grandchild of old Moon Eye who lives in adultery with white trappers," replied old Tua. "Her daughter had this boy, by a Spaniard, at Fort Walla Walla. She hates him and won't take care of him. Yesterday, some of the Cayuse boys got hold of him and tortured him."

"Why did they do that?" demanded Narcissa, though she knew the answer. No friendless thing, be it animal or child, had a chance to go unscathed if the adolescent Cayuse boys laid hands upon it.

The woman shrugged her shoulders and went on. "The grandmother says you can have him if you want him. We can't find any one else who'll take care of him."

At this moment old Moon Eye rushed into the room, seized the boy by the ankles and threw him over her shoulders. He roared with misery

"The priest at Fort Walla Walla will pay me for him!" she cried.

"Pay her something!" pleaded several of the pupil squaws.

Narcissa shook her head. "If I begin that, we'll have all the half-breed babies on the Columbia dumped at our door."

The grandmother shuffled out of the room with her screaming burden. Old Tua, after a moment of thought, hurried after her. It was an hour before she returned, triumphantly bearing the child. She had swapped her dress for him. With only a bit of blanket to cover her nakedness she again deposited him on Narcissa's desk.

"Well," sighed Narcissa, "I can't do less than you, Tua!"

She dismissed the school and told Sarah Hall to fill the washtub with warm water. Then she rolled up her sleeves and began the unsavory job of salvaging. When the child had been deloused, his wounds and burns bandaged, and a clean dress put on him, Narcissa discovered that he was singularly beautiful.

"Isn't he sweet, Sarah?" she asked, as she placed him in Sarah's unresponsive arms. "I'm going to call him Marshall, after another friend," she added. "Don't you think that's a fine name for such a pretty little fellow?"

Sarah grunted, giving the child a cool glance. He did not like his new nurse and at once slid down, grasped a fold of Narcissa's skirt in his tiny bandaged fist and followed her as she crossed the room. Young Trapper, watching the whole proceeding with a jealous eye, suddenly left the corner, where he had been moping and tried to interpose his shaggy gray head between the child and his mistress. Finding this impractical, he attached himself to the procession, worrying the child's bandaged ankles.

Narcissa glanced down at the little by-play and suddenly smiled, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Sarah," she said, "you'll have to finish my work for me!"

She sat down and took Marshall in her lap, laying a tender hand on Trapper's head as he squatted against her knee.

"Are you going to let that half-breed sleep in Alice Clarissa's bed?" demanded Sarah Hall.

Narcissa shook her head. "No, he shall have a little cot beside me."

"He's just about her size. That's why old Tua brought him to you. She thinks she's clever, that old Cayuse!" Sarah's gray eyes were snapping.

"I know she does," agreed Narcissa. "But the child was suffering, Sarah."

Sarah gave a little sob. "He isn't Alice Clarissa and he can't have her place!"

"No, he could not do that, of course, Sarah!" said Narcissa, gently, as she looked down at the pathetic little person in her lap.

He raised a pair of glorious brown eyes to her, and for the first time ventured a slow, sweet smile.

"Oh, the brutes!" whispered Narcissa. "How I loathe the brutes!" She gathered the half-breed child to her breast.

"But," protested Sarah, her cheeks flushing, "you'll be in trouble, taking a child like that, Madam Whitman, unless both the father and the mother have given him up. It gives endless chances for all of them to keep asking you for favors and gifts."

"I don't see how I can turn him back to be treated as he has been. Do you want me to, Sarah?"

"No, of course I don't. Why don't you send him to Père Demers?"

"And let him be a Catholic?" Narcissa looked at the child musingly.

The Mungers came in at this point and Narcissa told them the child's story. Mrs. Munger listened with interest, but Asahel sat unheeding during the recital, biting his nails and scowling at an Indian who stared in at the window. When Narcissa asked his advice, he gave a great start and said:

"I must be going on to the Sandwich Islands. I can't tarry here a day after Dr. Whitman gets back. The Lord calls me day and night. He scourges me with scorpions because I tarry here while the heathen in the Pacific perish."

His wife shook her head emphatically. "I'd rather the heathen would perish than you! I want to stay right here till the doctor cures you! You can save Indians as much to the glory of God as you can Sandwiches."

Asahel opened his parched lips, but before he could speak the Indian whose face had been at the window appeared in the doorway. He was a tall handsome young brave, wearing a red calico shirt over buckskin trousers. Round his neck was a fetish: four human fingers strung on a piece of gut.

He strode up to Narcissa. "I've come for my sister's child," he said in Cayuse. "This is the only boy of my family, except myself. You cannot have him."

"He shall stay with me until he is well!" Narcissa looked at the Indian with cool, blue eyes.

"Better give him up before there's trouble," suggested Munger.

"We won't do any such thing!" snapped Sarah Hall. "What right has an old cross-patch like you, who'd believe a baby could go to hell, to say another baby shall go back to torture?" She turned to the scowling brave, before the outraged carpenter from Ohio could reply. "Now, you, Tom Salmon, go back to old Moon Eye and tell her your scheme has failed."

The Cayuse ignored Sarah. "Give me six inches of tobacco and I'll give you the child."

Narcissa shook her head. "I'll give you nothing. Leave, at once. You are a wicked man to want to take its chance away from this child."

The Indian's face darkened. "I'll make you sorry for calling me bad," he said, and left the house.

Narcissa, entirely hardened to Cayuse threats, put the little boy, now asleep in her arms, to bed on a cot in her room. The Mungers went fussily off to the cabin and by nine o'clock the mission house was dark.

Narcissa was awakened by the squeaking of her door.

"Is it you, Sarah?" she asked quickly, some premonition causing her, at the same moment, to jerk aside the window curtain.

Moonlight flooded the room. Tom Salmon was standing, naked, beside her bed. He thrust an evil-smelling hand over Narcissa's lips.

"I'll ravish you, then take the boy," he said coolly.

Narcissa, with an upheaving of her whole body, totally unexpected by the Indian, brought her knees violently against his stomach. He coughed like a strangling horse and doubled up on the bed. Narcissa screamed for help and leaped to the floor, but he seized her by the wrist and clung to her, helplessly, while he recovered his breath. The half-breed baby woke, crying.

Narcissa struggled to free herself, screaming as she fought. She dragged the half-fainting Cayuse from the bed, but could not break his grasp. She was a superbly strong woman. The Indian was young, but in bad condition. She was his physical equal and put up an epic fight.

It seemed to her that she and the evil-smelling brave dragged each other back and forth for an eternity. As a matter of fact, it was less than five minutes before Sarah Hall, a candle in one hand and the living-room poker in

the other, rushed across the room. She brought the heavy iron bar down on the Indian's head and he dropped to the floor. Before Sarah could repeat the blow, he scrambled on all fours out of the door.

Narcissa collapsed on the bed. "Are you hurt? Dear Madam Whitman, are you hurt?"

"No!" gasped Narcissa. "Heat—hot—water. Put little Marshall—here in bed—with me—so he'll stop crying."

Sarah flew to obey. Little Marshall snuggled against Narcissa's shoulder. She was too much exhausted to try to soothe him, but when he felt her warm and quiet beside him, he ceased to sob and by the time Sarah returned with a steaming kettle, he was asleep.

With Sarah's help, Narcissa managed to take a hot bath. When this was done Sarah wished to go for the Mungers, but Narcissa felt that the carpenter and his wife would be only a nuisance. She told Sarah to bring the doctor's musket from the living-room, load it, and lay it on the floor beside her bed. Then she had her bolt the doors and lie down on little Marshall's cot.

Sarah was trembling with fear and horror, but shortly, soothed by Narcissa's calm voice, she went to sleep.

With the candlelight flickering on the rafters above her, Narcissa lay staring at nothing, until dawn. Had she been struggling with a boa constrictor, she would have been filled with no more loathing. She told herself, wildly, that she could not stay in Waii-lat-pu another day. Here, at last, was the evil that Governor Simpson had warned them of at Fort Hall. She would leave for Fort Walla Walla in the morning. Yet, even as she told herself this, her conscience whispered that she would remain at Waii-lat-pu until Marcus' return! She tried to pray and could not. Nor would sleep come until the slumbering child threw a little, bandaged hand across her breast.

Then, "Oh, my baby!" she whispered. "My little daugh-

ter in heaven, help me!" and, grateful for the warm, small hand against her heart, she fell asleep.

Sarah gave Narcissa her breakfast, in bed, in the morning. Except that she was sore and bruised, Narcissa was none the worse for her harrowing experience, and after eating, she dressed and prepared to carry on the day's work.

But this was not to be. It was as if, during this absence of the doctor, the Indians were determined to bring to a head all the grievances they had nourished for the years since the Whitmans' arrival. Narcissa scarcely had finished dressing, when Asahel Munger rushed unceremoniously into her room.

"We just put out a fire in the roof of the grist mill! I've sent for Mr. McKinlay from Fort Walla Walla. Roof's gone, but machinery's safe."

"But why did you send for the factor?" gasped Narcissa.

"Because, while my wife and me put out the fire, Umtippe and the other Indians laughed and said there'd be worse than that before they left for the buffalo hunt."

"Where are Charley Compo and the other converts?" Narcissa picked up the musket and laid it on the bed as she spoke.

"They left yesterday for the hunt. I sent old Tua to the fort. All that's left is Umtippe and his gang of old complainers. They mean mischief. What you got that gun here for?"

Narcissa told him. Munger's strange brown eyes blazed. "Give it to me! I never shot at anything, but I'd just as soon try to kill Tom Salmon as not."

Narcissa smiled, in spite of her anxiety, and shook her head.

Asahel looked relieved. "I'd rather be with the Sandwiches, myself. I'll get my wife and we'll stay indoors to-day. For the blood of the Lamb, and His marching

hosts. Amen!" Muttering incoherently, he rushed away.

They spent the day within doors. None of the squaws or children appeared in the schoolroom. Umtippe rode at intervals around the dooryard, but made no attempt to enter the house. It was an extraordinarily trying day, but when night came, Narcissa dared not try to sleep. She sat in her room, fully dressed, working on the Cayuse primer.

About ten o'clock she heard a crash. Then Mrs. Munger screamed. She picked up the candle and ran into the dining-room. It was ablaze with light from many candles and filled with Indians. As Narcissa entered, a buck sent his tomahawk into the corner cupboard where Narcissa kept a few pieces of china she had brought over the long trail from Angelica. Another kicked over the table and three or four bucks hacked at it with their axes. In a corner Munger prayed with a voice so shrill that it rose above the bedlam made by the Indians. Old Umtippe, wrapped in his buffalo robe, leaned against the door frame, directing the onslaught, while young Trapper snapped at his moccasins.

Narcissa stood, for a moment, utterly at a loss. Entreaty or command she knew would be idle. She watched the axes crash through the table that Marcus had wrought with such labor from hand-sawed lumber, dragged, log by log, the twenty miles from the foothills. She saw the buffalo-hide chairs rent into a hundred brown fragments. Then she saw Alice Clarissa's drinking cup hurled against the chimney piece and as the fragments flew in all directions, she knew what she must do.

She lifted her voice in the song she had thought never to sing again:

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top!
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,—"

For a moment the rich notes were lost in the anarchy of sound that filled the room. Then, as they gained power,

there was a hush of surprise cut by discordant laughter. The old chief, arms folded on his chest, looked at her with a scowl of contempt. But Narcissa sang on—

"If the bough breaks, the cradle will fall
And down will come rock-a-by, baby and all."

She repeated the song thrice. One by one the axes ceased to crash. Uneasy glances were cast by the braves, first at Narcissa, then at Umtippe. The Cayuse chief was still scowling. But, singing with a power that could have made a prima donna of her, Narcissa saw the familiar heave of the old man's chest, the quivering of his lips.

It was on the third repetition of the song that he pointed a trembling brown hand at her and shouted:

"Stop that song!"

Narcissa slowly crossed the cluttered room toward the old man.

"Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,—"

Umtippe drew away from her, beating his breast. "The little White Cayuse! Ai! the little White Cayuse!"

The room was filled now with groans. Umtippe, backing slowly out of the door, was followed, one by one, by his braves, who stared at Narcissa as if she were a visitant from another world. She sang until the last moccasined foot had dragged over the doorstep, until the last sound of galloping hoofs had died from the dooryard. Then she turned to the Mungers. They were crouched in a corner, their eyes hidden, praying without pause.

"Where is Sarah Hall?" asked Narcissa.

"Here I am!" Sarah put her head from beneath the wreckage of the couch. "And I've got the doctor's gun with me. And if you hadn't got in the way, I was just

going to shoot old Umtippe." She crawled from under the buffalo hides, the old musket clasped against her chest, her nightdress half torn from her slender body. "I kicked as many as I could. I thought you'd never come!"

Narcissa kissed the trembling girl. "Get yourself dressed, Sarah, and make coffee for all of us. Mr. and Mrs. Munger, we can't sleep after all the excitement. Let's begin to clean up this mess."

Mrs. Munger groaned, "I'm going to start walking back to the United States, to-morrow."

"You ain't! You're going to the Sandwich Islands with your lawful husband." The carpenter from Ohio ceased praying, to glare at his wife. "Take hold of this furniture now and let's see if we can mend what the varmints broke."

Coffee and work, with Narcissa's calm talk regarding the help that undoubtedly would come from Fort Walla Walla, gradually restored the morale of the household. After three or four hours, Narcissa persuaded the Mungers and Sarah to go to bed. She, herself, sat on the doorstep with the doctor's musket across her knees and Trapper at her side, waiting for dawn.

It came slowly, lifting majestically over the Blue Mountains, as if it marched to soundless music. The great plains, whose every orange contour Narcissa knew by heart, and the wavering lines of green that marked the willow-edged creeks, softly moved from the night's obscurity into her weary view. Red glow edged the eastern peaks, shot to the zenith, sought out the cottonwoods by the river and suddenly centered the dawnlight of the world upon a tiny mound. And here Narcissa's eyes rested until the sound of hoofs reached her.

Two Indians were driving a herd of horses across the river into the field of growing wheat. Umtippe was one of the two herdsmen. Narcissa fingered the gun restlessly. She was by no means of a meek nature and she found her-

self watching the devastating of Marcus' hard won wheat field with a growing and terrible anger. She sat with nostrils dilated, eyes gleaming like steel, long twitching fingers on the gun hammer, until she had reached the breaking point. Then she lifted the butt to her shoulder.

At that moment, two white riders galloped across the dooryard and brought their steeds to their haunches, before the fence that bounded the wheat field.

It was Governor Simpson and Miles Goodyear.

"Get out of this field, you damnable dogs!" roared the Governor.

Umtippe sent his horse at a canter up to the fence. "Don't you call me a dog!" he shouted.

"Get your horses out of this field—dog!" The Governor rose in his stirrups and pointed at the grazing herd with his riding whip.

Umtippe was riding half naked, his upper body smeared with red paint. Shaking with anger, he leaned toward Simpson. "Then you must promise to send that witch woman away. That's the only way you can pay me for sending out the horses."

"Pay you!" The Scotchman's jaw showed white through his tanned cheeks. "Pay you! I'll pay you as the Hudson's Bay Company paid the Cayuse who murdered Factor Jones! Do you understand?"

"There's been no murder here," retorted Umtippe.

"Sir George," interrupted Miles, who had been angrily watching the destruction of the wheat, "let me go after that herd while you carry on this parley."

"Stay where you are, Miles!" ordered the Governor. "Come," to Umtippe, "how long do you propose to keep me waiting here?"

"I want my pay!" shouted the chief.

"Pay! Pay! Did you ever pay Dr. Whitman for curing your wives? Did you ever pay Madam Whitman for saving

your nephew? Do you think you can continue as you are without punishment?"

"Who will punish us?" demanded Umtippe. "They are not King George people. Dr. Whitman is a Jesus man and don't dare punish any one for anything."

"Aye? Yes?" cried the Governor. "But you overlook one item, my sweet laddie! The Whitmans are friends of the Kitchie Okema's. Consider! The cannon at Fort Walla Walla are loaded with nails and powder. If any Indians attack this mission house, we shall take horses and hitch them to the cannon and drag them out here to collect pay for your destruction of the mission. And after your village has been shot to pieces, our pay shall be collected from your herd of a thousand horses that roam these plains. 'Tis evident you don't wish peace, Umtippe. You wish war. Very well! I'm glad we understand the Cayuse heart at last. If it is bloodshed you desire, that is our desire, too."

Umtippe shifted uneasily in his saddle. He glared at the Governor, then glanced down at Narcissa who, gun in hand, had drawn near the flank of Miles' horse.

"It's this yellow-haired woman!" he shouted. "She makes all the trouble. The white men who married half-breeds were kind to us Indians and took our side against the Bostons, until she came with her white skin and her yellow hair. Now, you all turn from your dark-skinned women to her."

The Governor turned white to the lips. Miles uttered an oath and raised his clubbed gun to strike the chief. But before the blow could descend, Narcissa's quiet voice stayed the young man's arm.

"It doesn't matter what he says. He's just a child, Miles."

Miles bit his lips, glanced at the Governor and rested his gun across his knees.

"Go!" Simpson's voice carried across the field.

Umtippe's contorted lips were foaming. He uttered a great groan, slowly turned his horse, and called out an order that caused the Indian in the field to begin hastily driving his herd out of the wheat. Then, without further word, he sent his pony at the fence, took it like a blowing leaf and was gone.

"Put your horses into the corral, Miles," said Narcissa, "and then bring the Governor into the house."

She hurried indoors to rouse the Mungers and Sarah, then went to her own room to make herself presentable. When she returned to the dining-room, she found Sarah Hall eagerly narrating the events since Marcus' departure to the Governer and Miles.

Simpson came forward and took both of Narcissa's hands. "My dear Madam Whitman,—" he began. And then, as he caught, for the first time, a full view of Narcissa's ravished eyes, he choked and turned hastily to a window.

Miles, his lips quivering, kissed Narcissa. "I wish we could have got here before!" he exclaimed.

"I'm thankful you got here at all, dear boy!" exclaimed Narcissa. "And Sarah mustn't make you think things were worse than they were. Tell me, Governor, what do you think of Sarah's English?" She smiled at her protégée's flushed cheeks and glowing eyes.

The Governor turned away from the window and, crossing the room, took Sarah by the tip of one small ear and turned her gently round. "Her English is as excellent as her pretty frock," he said. "She's a real Scotch lassie, I swear!"

"Prettiest girl in Oregon territory or in Rupert's Land, either," declared Miles, with a bow and a flourish that did credit to his new training.

Freed of the Governor's hand, Sarah made a sweeping

courtesy, then, blushing violently, she ran from the room. Miles followed her, pausing to murmur in Narcissa's ear as he passed, "Our peppery Kitchie Okema was made into a 'Sir' while he was in England."

"If you've all finished bowing and scraping," said Mrs. Munger, whose nerves, poor soul, were gone, "you'll find as good a meal of victuals on the table as I could get under the circumstances."

She shuffled from the room. Asahel had moved the cabin furniture in to replace what had been destroyed. Miles brought Sarah in and the meal proceeded, with Miles carrying the brunt of the conversation. For Narcissa insisted on his telling of his winter trip to Norway House. The Governor listened abstractedly. When Miles had finished, he said abruptly:

"You and Sarah run away and play for an hour, Miles, while I talk with Madam Whitman. Mind that you remain within hailing distance, my lad, for we cannot tarry here long."

"Yes, Sir George!" Miles rose docilely and took Sarah's hand. "Come, sister, come with brother!"

Sarah giggled and the Governor looked after the two thoughtfully.

Narcissa shook her head, as she led the way to the little parlor. "I hope you won't encourage that too much, Governor."

"Why not?" demanded Sir George, quickly.

"For many reasons," answered Narcissa.

The Governor gave her a searching look. "Well, we'll go into that, later. We have matters of more immediate import to discuss." He seated Narcissa beside the crude center table, then took the buffalo-hide chair before the window and fastened his fine gray eyes on her. He was looking, Narcissa thought, exceptionally well. His white ruffles, spotless above his flowered vest, his clean-shaven

cheeks, his well-trimmed hair—above all, his air of power and decisiveness—set him apart from Marcus—poor Marcus, with his slovenly ways and his struggle to bend his fiery nature to the Christian code.

Narcissa, herself, never had grown heedless of her personal appearance, as Sir George observed with satisfaction. And only one who, like the Governor, understood the difficulties of pioneer life, could appreciate what it had cost Narcissa to maintain her high standard of care for herself. The blue calico dress that she wore this morning was carefully made, and the waist fitted her fine form as well as if it had been cut from satin. The white collar, which was held at her throat by the cameo pin, gave a touch of elegance to her appearance, and her masses of yellow hair shone with good grooming.

"Where is the Cayuse brave, Tom Salmon?" asked Sir George, abruptly.

Narcissa shook her head.

"I shall send Miles to find him," the Governor went on. "He must return with us to Fort Walla Walla and there await Dr. Whitman's desires. Madam Whitman, how much longer shall you continue to throw yourself away in this terrible place? Do you not see that, though its coming was delayed, my warning at Fort Hall was true? I tell you—" He suddenly rose and began to pace the floor. "—the thought of that Indian's attack on you—God pity him when—" He pulled himself up with obvious effort and dropped again into his chair. "What good is being done by your stay here? Will you tell me, madam?"

"Any good that we might have done is being counteracted, to a large extent, by the priests," replied Narcissa.

"But certainly!" exclaimed Sir George. "It could not be otherwise. The priests are far wiser in their understanding of Indian nature than you Protestants. And as far as

embracing true Christianity goes, the Indians are invulnerable."

"Do you mean to tell me," cried Narcissa, "that God, Himself, is helpless in the face of this savage nature?"

"Not at all," replied Sir George. "God has His own reasons for making the Indian impervious to any permanent effects by your teachings."

Narcissa smiled. "I suspect you of believing that the Lord made the Indians so, in order to further your Company's interests."

"Perhaps!" The Governor smiled with her.

There was a moment's pause, then Narcissa leaned toward her visitor and said in a low voice:

"Sir George, I acknowledge defeat!"

"Defeat!" ejaculated the Scotchman. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," replied Narcissa, brokenly, "that if you will sell me passage, in one of your boats, I wish to go back to Angelica for a year's visit. If I do not have that respite, I cannot endure this place."

Sir George spoke breathlessly. "Has the doctor agreed to this?"

"Marcus doesn't know," answered Narcissa. "I only came to the conclusion the night after he left, when—when I realized what my loss had been, what the years before me meant."

Suddenly Sir George crossed the room, to take her hands again. "Dear Narcissa, I cannot tell you how my heart went out to you when I heard! Always, since that summer day, I have seen you and your babe before the cabin, you in your blue frock and the child in the fur-draped cradle, —alone—with Mount Hood. Oh, my dear, my dear, if only it were my right and my sacred privilege to offer you the comfort that wells in my heart!" Again his voice broke, and again he turned to the window.

Narcissa buried her face in her hands and prayed for strength.

After a moment, Sir George said, in his ordinary voice, "You may take passage in 'The Nereus' which sails homeward late in the summer. And you must let me say how wise I think your decision, though I grieve at the tragedy that drove you to it."

"It was the—tragedy, yes, that brought the climax, but, to be honest, Sir George, I think I've been coming to the determination, for a long time, that Waii-lat-pu would get on better without me. The Indians do not want me here; and now that the little White Cayuse is gone, they will never cease pursuing and annoying me. The doctor really gets on with them well enough. They laugh and joke with him and tell him all their troubles."

"The doctor will have no luck here, at all, without you," declared the Governor. "Better take him with you and be done with it."

Narcissa looked at him quickly. "Just what do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean that, as your friend, I'm delighted by a decision which saves you from failure, unhappiness, and worse. Take Dr. Whitman to the States with you. He has a sure career before him, as a physician; none at all as a missionary."

"If I thought,"—Narcissa spoke slowly—"that my leaving would bring about Marcus' defeat, I would not go."

"But, my dear Madam Whitman," cried Sir George impatiently, "you know his defeat is inevitable! Why draw out the agony? When this territory becomes British we shall not permit missionary work of your sort."

"*If* this territory—" corrected Narcissa.

"No, madam, *when!* Your Congress does not wish to add this isolated empire to its other governmental problems.

When I left London, the agreement between the two countries was all but ready."

"Are you sure?" cried Narcissa. "Don't try to startle me with vague statements, Sir George!"

"Is a treaty vague?" demanded the Governor. "Be Gad!"—his face suddenly flushing—"America doesn't deserve this territory. What has your Government done here but neglect every measure that would have insured Oregon's welfare? Consider the one item of rum alone? Has she joined with us in our struggle to control its sale? Do you realize the full horror of what your Yankee traders have done here with rum? We have used every weapon at our command to keep Americans from debauching the Indians with alcohol, but they have circumvented us at every opportunity. Do you perceive how serious is the crime that your countrymen have visited on Oregon, in refusing to obey our mandates and entreaties, as to this? Do you realize that, further east, they are debauching whole tribes with rum? At any moment, rum may enter the Nez Percés and the Cayuse camps. And then—God help you all! We cannot."

"Yes," said Narcissa, "I know."

"If I were superstitious," Sir George went on vehemently, "I'd believe that God had placed a curse on the coming of Americans into this Pacific country. It is American traders from the Missouri steamer 'Saint Peter' who brought smallpox here. It's spreading among the Indians like the use of rum. It's raging now among the Crows and the Flatheads. They die like frost-smitten flies. When that fellow, Jason Lee, returns from his crusade to save Oregon for America, he'll find half the Willamette Indians dead. . . . A British boat captain would have shot the first man who tried to leave his tainted ship. But you Americans must have liberty—liberty to destroy the Indians! If America should

gain control here, she'd destroy the Indian population in fifty years."

Narcissa tapped the table restlessly with her fingers. "I know! I know!" she repeated. "We are crude and rash and ignorant, as youth always is. We don't, as you say, deserve Oregon. By every right of personal sacrifice, wise control, supreme effort, it ought to be British. Nevertheless, Sir George, it shall be American!"

"*Shall* be!" exclaimed the Governor, indignantly.

"Shall be! You British are safe in India because, though you are far from England, you have no hungry and alien Anglo-Saxons crowding in at every port. Here, though nearer home than in India, you must meet uncontrollable competition. Folk of your own race, millions and millions of them, are pushing against your few score."

"Very pretty! Very pretty! But, happily for us, the land will be ours before the American hordes begin to flow in."

"I wonder!" said Narcissa, slowly. Something in the Governor's indignation and impatience made her suspect that he was by no means certain that the treaty had been signed.

"You will be able to satisfy yourself, next spring, both in London and when you reach New York." Sir George smiled with a serenity Narcissa was sure he did not feel.

"I am not sure, after our conversation, that I shall go." Narcissa returned the smile. "You have made me feel that, even if I'm not of any importance to the souls of the Indians, I am to the stability of the mission."

"You know as well as I do," protested the Governor, "that this mission is not of the slightest import."

"This mission, Sir George, is just three hundred and fifty acres of American soil to counterbalance the British soil at, we'll say, Fort Walla Walla."

"With your own lips you've agreed that America has no right to this territory. Yet you pronounce yourself about to continue the unworthy struggle. How do you reconcile that with your conscience as a missionary?" demanded the Governor.

"I suppose the reason is that, as you are a British subject before you are a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company," replied Narcissa, "I am an American before I am a missionary."

"Have it your own way!" chuckled the Governor. "Why not go to your Congress yourself, Madam Whitman? You'd make a most convincing advocate for Oregon."

Narcissa drew a quick breath. Here was a suggestion, indeed! Here was full justification for the cherished trip she had been about to abandon.

Sir George, watching her keenly, went on casually. "I am returning to England by 'The Nereus' myself, and taking Miles. The wife of the ship's captain is with him. She will be company for you."

Narcissa's cheeks flushed and her blue eyes grew eager. "How very—" she began, but a hoarse voice in the dooryard interrupted her.

"I have ordered a thousand cherubim and four thousand seraphim to guard the mission. Attention! Forward to hell!"

"It's Asahel Munger!" exclaimed Narcissa. "He's always been a little touched in the head and has gradually grown worse. I'm afraid the trouble of the last two days has unhinged him entirely. I'll go quiet him."

But, as she rose, Munger appeared in the doorway, dragging with him Père Demers.

"Here is the arch conspirator!" he shouted. "We must crucify him!"

And before the priest, the Governor, or Narcissa could

grasp his purpose, he suddenly drove through the priest's hand, which was clinging to the doorpost, a long augur bit, pinning the hand to the wood.

Sir George seized Munger at the moment of his insane act. Narcissa released Père Demers who, though his face was distorted with pain, spoke with admirable self-control.

"The man is quite mad! I'm sorry to have made this disturbance, madam."

"Don't apologize, pray!" exclaimed Narcissa. "I'll fetch bandages for your poor hand. Mr. Munger!"—turning to the carpenter, who was struggling in the Governor's stout grasp—"sit down in that chair and don't so much as lift a finger till I give you permission."

Very meekly, Munger ceased to struggle and when Sir George, rather ungently, it must be admitted, pushed him into a chair, he huddled in it, motionless.

Narcissa eyed him for a moment, then said, "On second thought, I'll not leave him. Sir George, if you'll just step to the door and call Sarah or Mrs. Munger, I'll send them for bandages."

"Mademoiselle Sarah," smiled Père Demers, holding his handkerchief to his bleeding hand, "is sitting on the hilltop with His Excellency's courier, her back to all the world."

Sir George grunted and started for the door, but was immediately forestalled in his errand, by the arrival of Mrs. Munger.

"Where's Asahel?" she panted. "Oh! What has he been doing, Mrs. Whitman? I was in the cabin and one of the squaws ran to tell me."

"Silence, woman!" thundered Munger. "The Lord of Hosts is here!"

Mrs. Munger wrung her hands and looked helplessly at Narcissa. Narcissa patted her, reassuringly, on the shoulder. "Bring bandages and hot water, Mrs. Munger. He has hurt Père Demers."

Mrs. Munger, lamenting audibly, ran to the kitchen and returned almost immediately, with a steaming kettle and the doctor's emergency kit. The Governor offered his assistance to Narcissa, but she shook her head.

"I've done this sort of thing for three years, under the doctor's supervision. I do not hurt you too much, do I, Père Demers?"

The priest, watching the skilful, tender fingers, shook his head, with a little smile. Sir George looked from Père Demers to Narcissa and he too smiled, but inscrutably. When the painful task was completed, Père Demers gladly rested in the buffalo-hide chair, while Narcissa turned to the carpenter.

"Mr. Munger, if you are to lead your hosts on such a long journey, you will need rest. I wish you'd come into the doctor's room and lie down. Will you not?"

"Will these imps of darkness remain here and will you go with me?" demanded Asahel.

"Yes," said Narcissa, shaking her head at the protest in the Governor's eyes. "Come!" She took the carpenter by the hand and led him into the dormitory room, which Marcus was using for a hospital.

Munger was as docile as a child. He took the heavy sleeping draught she prepared for him and lay down. He was asleep in five minutes, still clinging to the kind, strong hand.

The door of the dormitory opened into the yard. As Narcissa came out, she found Sir George leaning against the wall beside the door. He smiled at her with a little shake of his head.

"Well, dear madam, your troubles are manifold! You must lock that fellow up."

Narcissa nodded. "What in the world was Père Demers doing here?"

"I didn't stop to investigate," replied the Governor.

"Let's go ask him now. Look! There is no trouble on the hilltop, eh?"

Narcissa followed his smiling glance. Seated on the bench where Narcissa had spent so many weary hours, were Sarah and Miles. They were sitting very, very close together, their backs to the house, their eyes on each other, while the small boy, Marshall, played with Trapper at their feet.

"Miles has the stuff for a fine career in that blond head of his—with proper training," said Sir George, as he followed Narcissa into the parlor. "Ah, my dear Père, I hope you are feeling better! Tell us how it came about."

The priest had risen as Narcissa entered. He picked up his flat hat as he said, "I was returning from a parochial visit to Fort Colville and stopped to speak to the chief, Umtippe, with no intention of intruding on Madam Whitman's hospitality. I saw this man working at the mill and dismounted to ask him of Umtippe's whereabouts. Without warning, he sprang on me, twisted my hands behind me and ran me here, as you saw."

"You mustn't start until you've had dinner with us, Père Demers," said Narcissa. "That is, if you've forgiven Miles Goodyear and us for our share in the Jason Lee matter."

"Miles told me of that." The Governor spoke abruptly. "You exceeded your authority there, Père Demers."

"The boy was entirely wrong in his accusation!" declared Père Demers, hotly.

"Right or wrong," returned Sir George, "you must distinctly understand that secular authority overrides church authority, in this country. I especially regret that your efforts put you in controversy with Dr. and Madam Whitman."

"Ah!" breathed Père Demers. "Do you, indeed, sir! Then, I shall herewith offer my apologies to Madam Whitman."

Narcissa looked from one man to the other, trying to fathom the depths of the mystery each sought to conceal. But she could only guess uneasily at their measure.

"I accept your apology, sir," she said, with a little smile, "though I'm not quite certain for what phase of the unhappy episode you are apologizing. I wish,"—with an appealing gesture of both hands,—"you'd leave Umtippe alone. Haven't you Indians enough to work with, that you must constantly upset our Waii-lat-pu people? We keep away from the Walla Wallapoos."

"That's a fair offer, Père!" cried Sir George.

"Umtippe is already a Catholic," the priest replied, suddenly replacing his hat on the table and taking a chair. "The wise thing for you to do is to move your mission to another place. He never will be reconciled to your presence here, especially now that—"

He hesitated, and both men's eyes followed Narcissa's gaze, which turned to the tiny mound under the cottonwoods.

Père Demers cleared his throat. "I prayed for your child's soul, madam, though I fear you may resent it."

"Resent it!" Narcissa's voice broke, but she recovered herself quickly. She gave the priest a curious smile. "Perhaps I deserved that! We are narrow, we priests and missionaries. But I deserve it no longer. Look, Père Demers."

She went to the little cupboard in the corner near the fireplace and took from it a little bag. From the bag she drew a tiny, blackened figure, which she laid gently on her palm.

"Look! Did Umtippe tell you that I burned his rosary?"

The priest's lips tightened as he nodded.

"Did he tell you," Narcissa went on, "that, in return, he destroyed the almost completed manuscript of my Cayuse primer, on which I had put over a year's work?"

"No! He did not tell me that!" exclaimed Père Demers. "Oh, that was very wrong!"

"The old beast!" cried Sir George. "Be Gad, Madam Whitman, I'd have burned his head off with red-hot tongs!"

"We both were wicked fools," declared Narcissa. "I had less excuse than Umtippe. Père Demers, when Umtippe had rushed out, I stood looking at the fire. You understand that I had cast in there what I looked upon as an idol with which you had snared a soul that I was praying to save. Yet, as I looked, the tiny form on the cross glowed with life and writhed in agony. And I realized that it was Christ, the Christ I adore. And it seemed to me that His agony was not alone for my deed, Père Demers, but for the thing you and I and our confrères are doing: bringing the deadly influence of our sectarian hatreds among these helpless savages—bringing it in His name and for His sake!"

Narcissa paused and gazed down at the little figure. "I rescued the crucifix, as you see. And my memory was busy with it when you buried poor Pierre Pambrun. It was this pitiful thing that made me see how beautiful is your faith —how beautiful are all our faiths, if we can but keep close enough to Him for our blind eyes to see. I can never be a Catholic, Père Demers, nor you, a Protestant. But we love the same Christ and we can, at least, cease to war on each other."

The priest glanced uneasily at Sir George, who was regarding Narcissa with eyes in which pain and admiration glowed, for him, who would, to read. Then, with a sudden obvious determination to meet this disciple of an alien faith on her own high level, Père Demers squared his shoulders —defiantly, perhaps, for the Governor's benefit—and said, "We are destined to war on each other, here in Oregon, Madam Whitman, till one or the other is destroyed. For the first time, you have made me wish it might have been

otherwise. But, even while I do that which I must do, I shall pray for you, my very noble enemy."

Narcissa, lips parted, cheeks flushed, listened with every sense concentrated on understanding the grave personality before her. And as she listened, the familiar premonition of disaster which had been submerged by her baby's tragedy, returned to her with undiminished force. Her simple, honest offer of friendship had failed before the menace of something these two men represented. She made the priest a graceful bow.

"I am sorry, Père Demers," she said. "And I am not ungrateful for your prayers."

Once more the priest took up his hat. This time Narcissa did not detain him and, with a bow that included Sir George, he left the house. Narcissa put the crucifix back in its place.

"I shall not go to Angelica," she murmured.

"What in Père Demers' attitude has influenced you?" demanded Sir George.

Narcissa returned to her seat by the table. "I dare not leave my simple, straightforward Marcus to his machinations. I grant you, Sir George, that we shall not be able to salvage the Indian. He is doomed. But we shall remain at Waii-lat-pu to the end. What that end is, I cannot foresee."

"The end will be a massacre!" ejaculated Sir George, "and through no machinations of priest or politician. The cause is in the essential natures of you and the Cayuse. For God's sake, Narcissa," leaning forward to take her hand, "don't do this suicidal thing!"

"I must," answered Narcissa, wondering, as she spoke, where she found strength for the refusal. For the clasp of that firm, kind hand touched her inmost heart. "I was half mad with grief or I could not have dreamed of going."

"You will forego that long, peaceful ocean voyage with

me, your friend? You will forego the stop in England, where I shall take such pride in showing you my home, of introducing you to the men and women who direct the destinies of the empire? You will forego the visit to Washington, the conversations with your President and his associates? Forego all this, to stay in this God-forsaken spot and invite death?"

"I must not go," Narcissa repeated.

"Then," said the Governor, releasing her hand and his face turning a ghastly white, "I take it that you repudiate my friendship."

"How can you say that?" asked Narcissa.

"You cannot remain my friend and continue your endeavor to undermine me in the task my sovereign has set me." Still white to the lips, Sir George rose and took a turn up and down the little room. After a moment he paused before her and said, his face distorted with pain, "You cannot realize what this is costing me—what you mean to me!"

"And do you think there is no price set upon my decision?" asked Narcissa. "Am I a human being of stone? Doesn't my fire flare to meet yours!"

She had risen, too, and towered before him, beautiful, tragic, solitary.

"Oh, Narcissa! Narcissa!" he groaned.

She struck her hands together against her bosom and fought as she never had fought before. All that was untamed within her, which had found outlet in her music, now struggled for expression through her feeling for this man, whose intellect, whose power, whose splendid personality so fascinated her. But her will did not fail her; and when she did speak, it was in the words of that Christ whose cause she had pleaded with Père Demers.

"'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?—

Father, save me from this hour?—Nay, for this cause, came I unto this hour!'"

The Scotchman covered his face with his hands. "Amen!" he groaned. Then, he placed his palms on the table and leaned toward her.

"Madam Whitman, from the moment Dr. Whitman returns home, the protection of the Hudson's Bay Company is withdrawn from this mission and from all other Protestant missions. You shall receive from us no supplies and no support of any character. Also, this day ends the friendship between you and myself. And since you persist in ignoring all efforts on my part to dislodge you, I warn you that, if the Indians do not destroy your mission in the next two years, your Board of Commissioners will be moved to recall you. . . . I shall be very grateful if you will have your woman prepare a lunch for Miles and me and we'll be away. I shall send Umtippe on an errand to Fort Vancouver which will keep him occupied about three weeks. I shall take Tom Salmon to Fort Walla Walla. These two acts will end my care for you."

Narcissa bowed and left, in search of Mrs. Munger. The Governor went into the yard and tramped restlessly back and forth while the meal was in preparation. To him there came Sarah and Miles, hand in hand.

"Sir George," said Miles, so clearly that Narcissa, smoothing her hair in her bedroom, heard him distinctly, "Sir George, may I marry Sarah Hall?"

"You may not, sirrah," barked the Governor, "unless you take the training I have designed for you and become a British subject!"

"Me—a British subject!" ejaculated Miles. "What's that got to do with my making Sarah a good husband?"

"Everything in the world! Sarah is destined for something more than marriage with a catch-penny, rum-trading

American. Get our horses, Miles, and save your love-making. We're away, directly luncheon is over."

Miles stared at the Governor, as though he could not believe what he heard. Sarah, who held the Governor in excessive awe, suddenly buried her face on Miles' shoulder.

"But I'm an American, sir!" exclaimed Miles. "I don't want to be British and I do want to marry Sarah. I'm sorry to defy you, Governor, but I'm going to marry her!"

"Sorry to defy me, indeed, sirrah! You young jackanapes! Sarah, look at me, miss! You'll not marry Miles unless he obeys my behests. Do you understand me?"

Sarah raised her head and, though she trembled visibly, she spoke up hardily, "I'll not marry him till you say I may, sir, but I'm engaged to him and I love him and I'll never marry anybody else."

Sir George gave a short laugh. "Be Gad, you've grown up, my dear!—thanks to Miles, eh? Play your pretty game, Sarah, but keep yourself intact for marriage with the Britisher I shall find for you."

At this moment Narcissa appeared at the door.

"Luncheon is ready, Sir George," she said.

Sarah freed herself from Miles' arm and flew into her room. Miles turned, chin up, toward the corral, and Sir George followed Narcissa into the dining-room.

"You heard the conversation with the two children, madam?" asked Sir George, as he took his teacup from Narcissa's hand.

"Yes, I heard it," replied Narcissa, smiling. "I am wondering, in the light of this morning's events, if you shall wish to leave Sarah longer with me."

"I shall send for her in a few weeks' time," replied Sir George, with rigid jaw. "If you wish her to go at once, I'll take her in to the McKinlays at Fort Walla Walla."

"I don't wish her to go at all," said Narcissa, sadly. "I shall be entirely desolate without her."

"I'm just not going!"

Narcissa and Sir George turned. Sarah was standing in the doorway, eyes blazing.

"I'm not going! This is the only decent home I ever had. Nobody paid any attention to me for all those years, till I was big enough to be worth something in trade. I am a daughter to Madam Whitman and the doctor. They both say so. If you take me away, I'll run off with Miles. If you leave me here, I'll do what you say."

Something in her defiance delighted Sir George. He chuckled and turned back to his plate. "You'll do what I say, in any event, mademoiselle! Ah, Miles, you're late! Make haste, lad!"

The meal was completed in silence and Narcissa was relieved when it was over. When the two men stood at the door, beavers in hand, she said:

"I haven't thanked you, Sir George and Miles, for saving me from my dreadful predicament this morning."

"Thanks are unnecessary, Madam Whitman," said the Governor, bending low over her hand.

"I'll be here soon again," whispered Miles, as he kissed her and followed Sir George out into the yard.

Narcissa stood in the door and watched them out of sight.

CHAPTER XVI

LOCHINVAR

THE days were long until Marcus' return. Sarah Hall, alternately ecstatic and depressed, was the one enlivening element at Waii-lat-pu. Asahel Munger kept to his bed, whether because of bodily weakness or mental, Narcissa could not discover. He was extraordinarily irritable, but entirely obedient. The few Indians who remained in the camp made no trouble. Umtippe was not seen again for many months.

Marcus returned in about three weeks. The Walkers had presented Oregon with a baby son, the second white boy born in the Columbia country. All had gone well, but the journey was a long one, and Marcus had been consumed with anxiety about Narcissa. He watched her eagerly on the evening of his return, as she unpacked his saddle-bags for him. She was looking thin, but she seemed otherwise her normal self. He insisted on learning at once all that had occurred at the mission, and she began the account by telling him about little Marshall and the trouble his arrival had precipitated.

Over the account of Tom Salmon's attack, the doctor's face went livid. "Where is the vile hound?" he shouted, starting for the door.

"He's in a cell at the fort, waiting for your return," replied Narcissa.

"Ah!" Marcus paused. "I shall go in there to-morrow. I'll not leave him to Governor Simpson, I can tell you." He stood, biting his nails and glowering, by the door. "I shall never go off and leave you again," he said. "That's flat."

"Come and sit down, Marcus," said Narcissa, gently. "There's more I want to tell you."

As the doctor sat down on the bed, she began to tell him of her night of tears and her determination to go home. Then she told him of the conversation with Père Demers, of her decision to remain at Waii-lat-pu, and of Governor Simpson's ultimatum.

When she had finished, Marcus stared at her, dumbfounded. "You would have left me—here—your husband—who would die for you, gladly? Oh! Narcissa! Narcissa!"

"But I gave up the thought!" cried Narcissa. "It was because of baby's death. Don't you understand? I've only told you of it that you may understand how serious is the stand Sir George has taken against us."

"You wanted to leave me for two years—forever—me, who love you so!" repeated Marcus. And, suddenly, he dropped on his knees and, burying his head in her lap, burst into agonizing sobs.

"Don't, Marcus! Don't!" moaned Narcissa, her hands on his shoulders. "Oh, won't you understand that my thoughts are set here now, far more firmly than they were before I had the temptation?"

But, all the years of uneasiness, all the long endeavor, all the frustrated dreams, all the broken hopes, had gathered tremendous weight in Marcus' heart. Narcissa's confession had opened a floodgate which could not, at once, be closed. But, at last, yielding to the quiet touch on his shoulders, the doctor regained his self-control and rose.

"I've known all along that I was too rough for you," he muttered.

"It's not that! It's—"

The doctor interrupted her. "If you loved me, no hardship, no loss could drive you from my side." He paused, then, "Narcissa," he said, "is there any hope that you can

grow to love me? If there is, stay. If there is not, go—for I can't endure the torture of living with you, this way. What do I lack, Narcissa? Is it because I'm slovenly? I can change that, and I will. Is it because my manners are rough? I can become as polished as your man, Simpson!"

"Who knows what breeds love, Marcus?" asked Narcissa, sadly. "I only know that I shall stay here with you and that I'm, oh, so very, very fond of you!"

Marcus watched her with painful eagerness. "Lately," he said, "I've grown hopeless and careless. But now, I'm going to begin again and make love to you, as if these three years were wiped out and I was courting you in Angelica. And yet, I know that I'm a fool!"

"Then you're a very dear fool!" exclaimed Narcissa.

Marcus lifted one of her hands to his lips. "God keep you safe for me, my dear wife!" he whispered.

The next day Marcus went into Fort Walla Walla, but was back at Waii-lat-pu, in an astoundingly short time, his face grimly content. His reply to Narcissa's inquiries was terse.

"Nobody there but McKinlay and his half-breed help. Said Tom Salmon got into a drunken brawl a week ago, with an American trapper, about rum, supplied by the trapper. Salmon was killed and the trapper disappeared. I shook hands with McKinlay."

Narcissa stared, wide-eyed, at the doctor. "Do you realize how horrible it is, how callous we all have become? Marcus, this isn't Christianity!"

"I know it!" replied Marcus, still with the look of grim satisfaction. "Mr. McKinlay," he added, after a moment, "wishes very much that after you have got the small Marshall into good trim, you'd let him have him. Seems that McKinlay knew the boy's father very well. He was a Spanish trapper and was drowned a couple of years ago saving a Hudson's Bay Company man's life. McKinlay

says he'll see that the boy's brought up a Protestant and he'll give him an education. He'd lost all track of him because of the mother's machinations. I really think you'd better do this, Narcissa. The boy will be a constant source of friction here."

"He's a dear little fellow! I'm already attached to him," said Narcissa, thoughtfully. "But perhaps you are right. But if he is to go, I'd rather he'd go at once, before I grow any fonder of him."

"McKinlay will be passing in a day or so and will take him," said Marcus.

Narcissa gave a little sigh of loss, and the child Marshall had ended his brief but dramatic career at Waii-lat-pu.

What to do with Asahel Munger was a serious problem. Mrs. Munger's one prayer was that they be allowed to return to the States, but this was not to be thought of, while the man's physical and mental condition remained as it was. He was so amenable to Narcissa's control and so extraordinarily useful in his trade, that finally it was agreed that, during the winter, he should work in the mission house, finishing the interior, under Narcissa's eye and care, and that if his health permitted, he should be sent by ship to the Sandwich Islands in the spring.

That the Hudson's Bay Company had washed its hands of the mission did not disturb Marcus as greatly as it did Narcissa. He saw in neither Demers nor Simpson the mysterious menace that so profoundly affected his wife. Even the Governor's thrust that he could force the American Board to withdraw them, while it worried him for a few months, was soon half forgotten in the rush of events about him. The mission was extraordinarily prosperous. Their converts increased very slowly, but more and more of the younger Indians were putting in crops and were learning to depend on the mission for their bodily welfare. Marcus snapped his fingers at Governor Simpson.

"And I'm not worrying about Spalding's tittle-tattle, either," he assured Narcissa. "With the Walkers and the Eells and Smiths to pick on, to say nothing of the Grays and Cornelius Rogers, he's bound to give us very little attention."

Narcissa laughed and agreed with him as to Spalding. She did not, however, in the least agree with him as to Sir George Simpson's impotence. Yet there seemed little to do but to thrust the roots of the mission more and more firmly into the ground and to await the turn of events. The Governor's threat to remove Sarah Hall remained unfulfilled, nor did Narcissa believe that Sir George had any real desire to take the young girl away from under her influence.

During the autumn, the work at Waii-lat-pu grew heavier and heavier. The doctor's little office or hospital room was seldom empty, for the trappers for hundreds of miles around came to Marcus to be healed. He was also physician-in-ordinary to the Cayuse tribe, or such meager remnants of it as did not follow Umtippe to the south. He was the farmer and the provider for the household of six, the lay preacher for the Tuesday prayer meetings and the double service on Sunday.

But with all the pressure of heavy work upon him, Marcus did not forget his promise to Narcissa. Every dawn found him painstakingly shaving his stubborn beard. And he made an obvious effort to soften his coarse guffaw of laughter, to subdue, in her presence, his slap-stick manner with other men and to show her the little courtesies that he had observed were offered her by men of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Narcissa was grateful. Yet it hurt her to see Marcus, by nature so big, attempting to win her by means so trivial. She found herself studying Marcus more carefully than ever before. She grew to believe that there was a promise in him that he never had fulfilled and that, she suspected,

had caused her to have faith that she would grow to love him. Despite his roughness, despite his careless attitude toward much that Narcissa held dear, there was a forcefulness about Marcus that made most other men seem colorless. He had been destined, Narcissa told herself, for big deeds, for something greater than Waii-lat-pu, so far, had offered him.

Narcissa's analysis of her own and Marcus' problem stopped here. She was too modest to realize that hers was too powerful a personality to give love to one less than herself. She was too modest to realize that, thus far in their married life, Marcus never had shown himself to be her mental or spiritual equal. She paused, after convincing herself of the doctor's capacity for great accomplishments, and prayed for an opportunity to help him to the fulfilment of himself.

In the fall of 1839, Dr. McLoughlin returned from England. Marcus and Narcissa longed to see him, but he made no such friendly gesture as before, from Fort Walla Walla, and neither of them was willing to risk a snub by undertaking the trip to Fort Vancouver, which they had promised themselves when the Chief Factor should return. But they heard, late in the winter, through a trapper, that trade between Fort Vancouver and Sitka was open, that the Hudson's Bay Company had leased ten leagues of the Russian-claimed seaboard, "lousy with sea otter," and that McLoughlin was sending James Douglas to conciliate the tottering Spanish government in San Francisco and to establish trading posts in San Francisco Bay. Narcissa, listening to the trapper's gossip, eyed the map that had been transferred from the cabin to the parlor of the new house.

"They will control trade on the Pacific Coast by the time our Congress has ceased bickering over the north boundary of Maine," she said.

"Well, we can't do nothing about it," said the trapper,

squirting tobacco juice neatly into the fire, "except to git enough Yankees in here to do up the British. I heerd Jason Lee was doin' a lot of preachin' back in the States. Maybe he'll start a caravan coming. I wisht it was so a wagon could come through."

Marcus gave the man a quick look, as though he, suddenly, had come to a determination, but he made no audible comment on either the trapper's or Narcissa's statements. A day or so later, however, he asked Narcissa if she would be willing to go with Sarah on a visit to Lap-wai, while he made his way to Fort Boise for the wagon. Narcissa was eager for the wagon to complete its journey, but entirely unwilling to leave Waii-lat-pu to the mercy of the Indians. With Umtippe away, she had little fear of her ability to keep peace. She and Marcus had a long argument over the matter and finally the doctor yielded to her importunings. On a lovely day, in late February, he started on his trip to the Snake, leaving Narcissa at Waii-lat-pu.

Sarah gave him a last message. "Doctor, if you should see Miles there, tell him I never thought he'd let the Governor make him break his promise to write me. I don't see why," she added, as she followed Narcissa back into the house, "I don't see why Miles don't turn British and be done with it. He's working for the British and trying to learn to be like them."

Narcissa looked at the girl in surprise. "But you've said so often, Sarah, that Miles mustn't give up his own country, that you'd have no respect for him if he did."

"Well, I'm tired of being high-minded!" retorted Sarah. "I'm tired of watching down that trail for letters that never come. I know now how you used to feel. Only I'm a hundred times sadder and more heartbroken. After all, a lover is different from a mother! Oh, Madam Whitman, I'm so miserable! And I'm sick of the thought of Miles Good-

year. I hate him for letting that old Scotchman boss him so! I wish I was dead."

Narcissa kissed Sarah's quivering lips. "What made you hope the doctor might see him at Fort Boise, dear? It's an improbable time of year for him to be there. I believe, myself, that both he and Sir George are in England."

"I didn't really hope," replied Sarah. "Fort Boise is a Hudson's Bay post, that was all."

Narcissa said nothing. This was a rare outbreak on Sarah's part, and Narcissa's heart ached in response to the misery in her beautiful gray eyes. But she believed that Miles' long silence could mean only that he was still determined not to agree to Sir George's alternative, and she gloried in his loyalty, even while she grieved for Sarah.

Marcus had hoped to complete his trip in a month's time. By the end of the fifth week of his absence, Narcissa was beginning to feel a little anxious. By the end of the sixth, she had made up her mind to send Charley Compo out as a relief party. On the day Compo was to start, it rained; a heavy downpour, accompanied by a thick mist that obscured all views and magnified every sound. Narcissa, standing in the open door, waited with the grim patience which the vagaries of the Indians were teaching her, for Compo to make up his mind to begin his journey; waited for a long hour for the sound of his horses' hoofs. But this was not the sound that, at the end of the hour, caused her to run suddenly out into the rain toward the east trail.

She had caught a strangely familiar note.

Creak! Creak! Creak!

"Marcus," she called. "Oh, Marcus!"

"Coming, Mrs. Whitman," answered a cheerful voice.

"That's Miles' voice!" shrieked Sarah Hall, flying past Narcissa.

Two long-eared, nodding heads appeared, then Miles'

face, smiling grimly from beneath the canvas of the Conestoga.

"Where's the doctor?" cried Narcissa, her heart turned to ice.

"Here, Narcissa!" called Marcus, faintly, from the rear of the wagon.

"Thank God! Thank God!" panted Narcissa, running beside the mules. "Draw up to my door, the open one. Is the doctor hurt, Miles?"

"He'll come through all right," replied Miles. "Whoa, Jennie! Whoa, Jewell!"

A group of Indians and the Mungers appeared as if by magic. They all talked at once, as Miles and Munger made a chair of their joined hands and carried the doctor into the house, where they laid him on the bed. Narcissa drove every one out of the room, even Miles, and bolted the doors.

Marcus looked up at her with a smile. "After all, it was Miles and I who brought her through, the old lady Conestoga!"

"What happened?" Narcissa sat on the edge of the bed and chafed Marcus' rough hands.

"I got along well enough," said Marcus, "although it was awful slow going, until I reached the Blue Mountains. Then it wasn't so bad, because I didn't follow the Hudson's Bay pack trail, but the one Miles had told me about, which can be used well enough by wagons. But about fifty miles east of here, the mules slipped off a canyon edge and carried the wagon with them. I got the mules up, all right, but I brought on rupture, here in the groin, when I was heaving at the wagon. I could feed myself, but I couldn't walk or ride. I'd been lying there a couple of days when Frank Ermatinger came up. . . . Narcissa, he acted like a crazy man!"

The doctor raised himself on one elbow, gasped with pain and dropped back again.

"There! Don't try to tell me any more now, Marcus!" exclaimed Narcissa. "You're here—and the wagon! That's enough for the present. What can I do to help you?"

"No, let me finish the story! He ripped through the trees like a bear and shoved the wagon down the canyon again, swearing he'd make kindling wood of it. Then I got mad, Narcissa, and I covered him with my gun. He'd rushed after me from Fort Boise, leaving all his Indians behind him, or I suppose my name would have been mud right there. He'd never thought of me as anything but a cowardly hymn singer, I suppose. Anyhow, he couldn't do anything but sit and curse me, and I was wondering what on earth to do next, when Miles appeared. Seems he'd been at Fort Hall, for the Governor, and had heard of my visit to Fort Boise and of Ermatinger's wild rush after me. He'd followed, knowing there'd be trouble. Narcissa, Miles is a man! He made me put down my old gun; then he had a rough-and-tumble with Ermatinger and tied him up, while he got the wagon back on the trail. When he had me packed in under what was left of the canvas, he told Ermatinger that his Indians would be along in a few hours and release him, and then he drove off. . . . Ermatinger will be here any moment."

Narcissa rose. "What can he do, but storm? How about me getting you a warm drink, then helping you into bed, dear?"

"Fine!" sighed Marcus. "It's good to be home!" Then, as Narcissa started for the kitchen, "Narcissa, I shaved every morning, even when the pain was at its worst."

Narcissa came swiftly back to the bed. "Marcus! Marcus!" she whispered, "sometimes you make my heart ache." She stooped and, for the first time since their marriage, she voluntarily kissed him on the lips. Then she retreated, leaving Marcus to stare with tear-blinded eyes at the ceiling.

In the meantime, Miles had followed Sarah Hall into the parlor.

"You never wrote me! You never sent me word," she began. But Miles, his young face white with feeling, did not offer an immediate explanation. He put his arms around Sarah and drew her slender body against his, kissed her eyes, her lips, her throat, then, still with lips against hers, he whispered:

"Père Demers shall marry us to-morrow!"

Sarah moved her face from his. "How is that possible?" she demanded.

"I'll explain everything if only, first, you'll tell me that you've had faith in me, that you love me as much as ever!" cried Miles.

Sarah's lovely mouth quivered. "I love you. Oh, I love you! But how could I have faith when I didn't know?"

Miles held her from him to gaze at her with tenderly appraising eyes. Sarah's beauty was startling. Delicate of feature, her only facial heritage from the Iroquois was a certain tragic dignity of expression, infinitely appealing in so young a person. Her body was slender, with the Indian's erect carriage and look of poise.

"But you will marry me, even if I strained your faith?" asked Miles.

"Yes!" replied Sarah. "But, oh, Miles, how could you treat me so!"

Miles drew her to him again and answered with his cheek on hers. "I've been to England with Sir George. I wrote you, but I suppose I'm here ahead of the letters. Kiss me, darling little Sarah!"

It was this kiss that Narcissa interrupted. She laughed softly at their scarlet faces. "Children, I'm sorry. But I must ask Miles some questions."

"Of course, Mrs. Whitman!" Miles came toward her, leading Sarah by the hand.

Narcissa looked from one to the other. They were very beautiful. Miles had achieved six feet of height and had lost his boyish look of carelessness. His blue eyes were clear and ordinarily a little cold, though now they were deep with tenderness.

"Is all well with you both?" asked Narcissa.

"Yes!" exclaimed Miles.

"Then tell me," said Narcissa, "if you expect the man Ermatinger here this evening."

"Yes, he'll be here," replied Miles cheerfully, "to continue his quarrel with me."

"What do you wish me to do?" Narcissa returned Miles' smile.

"Get Sarah ready for her wedding to-morrow. Sir George has given his consent."

"Which means you are giving up your American citizenship!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Miles, how can you?"

The grim look appeared in Miles' eyes. "I must. I can't live without Sarah."

"Ah, but you can!" breathed Narcissa. "Do not pay too great a price for your love, dear Miles."

"No price can be too great!" cried Miles.

Narcissa sighed. "After all, you are only twenty-one, aren't you?" She thought sadly of her own starved youth; then made herself say, "But, Miles, in after years, to have given up your country—even for Sarah, lovely as she is—"

"Women are expected to do it right along! What's so shocking in a man's doing it?" demanded Miles. "Besides, we have work to do, big work, Sarah and I. She is the granddaughter of the hereditary chief of the Iroquois. All the rest of his family has died out. When I've finished my training in England, I'm to go to Oxford House, below York Factory, in Rupert's Land and—" He paused, as if in response to the sudden eager light in Sarah's eyes. "You'll be glad of that, Sarah, dearest!"

"Glad!" Sarah lifted her oval chin. "It will be going out of the darkness into light!"

"Have you told the doctor?" asked Narcissa.

Miles shook his head, then turned toward the door. "Listen!" he cried, "I hear Ermatinger's outfit now!" He started toward the door.

But Ermatinger strode into the room before Miles could leave it.

"Sorry to intrude, Madam Whitman," he exclaimed, bowing to Narcissa, "but I'm belated on my way to Fort Walla Walla and I've got a bone to pick with this fellow."

"You're a noisy picker, Frank," said Miles, coolly. "Let's go outside."

"No, indeed, you won't!" cried Narcissa. "It's our wagon that has made the trouble. You're quite welcome, Mr. Ermatinger, to quarrel about it in our house!"

But the trader was in no mood to respond to Narcissa's amused smile.

"This young cat's-paw!" he shouted. "This lick-spittle pet of the Governor! He's made a monkey of me and I'll have his scalp for it, by God! Come out from behind women's petticoats, you, before I drag you out. No man can live and do what you did to me."

Miles grunted. "Talk sense, Ermatinger! It was a fair catch-as-catch-can. I'm a younger and stronger man than you, and you know it. What do you want to do? Take me up to Fort Vancouver and let all the Company know that I licked you, or do you want to keep your mouth shut and no one be the wiser?"

Ermatinger stood glaring at Miles, swallowing rapidly and obviously picturing to himself the discomfiture that would be his, did Miles carry out his threat. When he spoke it was from a new angle.

"You're a traitor to the Company, you 'Boston bastard,'

you! You've earned your discharge by letting that wagon through."

"What's that you called me?" asked Miles, white to the lips, but not stirring.

Ermatinger glanced at Narcissa and Sarah, standing side by side before the fireplace and he made a hasty bow. "Beg pardon!" he muttered. Then, loudly, "When the Governor learns how you worked against his policy, he'll kiss you, I suppose, and raise your pay! Well, you're going to be fooled, my pretty pet. He's going—"

"Oh, dry up, Ermatinger," interrupted Miles wearily. "The doctor had brought the wagon through, as you very well know. The fifty miles left were easy going. Whether you destroyed the wagon or not, he'd done his job and all the Americans on the Columbia will know it and write back to their friends to follow his trail. What I found was a man with a rupture as big as my fist. I used his infernal old wagon to bring him out after he'd done all the harm he could to our policy."

"Our policy?" sneered Ermatinger.

"Yes, 'ours,'" insisted Miles. "I've made my agreement with Sir George Simpson to become a British citizen and he's consented to my marrying Miss Sarah Hall. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, be Gad!"

Miles' pompous voice suddenly melted to pure boyish bravado. Ermatinger's eyes started from their sockets. He stared from Miles to Sarah and back again. "Marry her? Do you know who she is? Are you telling the truth, that the Governor has consented?"

"'Do I know who she is?'" mimicked Miles. "Do you know who I am, Ermatinger, me buck? Well, I'm the bright young bucko that limped up to Captain Thing on one moccasin, four years ago, and asked him for a job. And I got it! And I'll tell you a secret, Frank! I'm so much

smarter than any of those British lads the Governor had in his service that the Governor's thinking of giving me his own job, next year!"

Ermatinger's lips twitched. "You impudent puppy! It's your brass that's got you on with Sir George, and nothing else."

"That might be!" agreed Miles, coolly. "He's likely to give responsibility to a fool, the Governor! But, while you're talking about who's what, Frank, let me tell you another secret. My mother's father or uncle, I can't remember which, was Governor of Virginia. And that same governor would have been a duke of somebody if he'd gone back to England. Now, aren't you proud that I threw you and tied you up, you old beaver stamp?"

The trader's twitching lips suddenly expanded into a broad smile. "The devil take your impudence, Goodyear! Well, if you'll keep your mouth shut, I will. How about you and the doctor, madam, and Sarah Hall?"

"We'll say nothing, of course," said Narcissa. "And now, is the hatchet sufficiently buried for you to sit down to supper with us, Mr. Ermatinger?"

"The hatchet is buried," returned the trader, "but I must hurry on to Fort Walla Walla. I'm due there to-night. I'll eat as I ride. Good day to you all!" He bowed, half sardonically, Narcissa thought, and left the house.

"I shall go tell the doctor of the outcome of the visit," said Narcissa. "If he's not too tired, I think you two had better come in and tell him about your plan of being married by Père Demers."

Hand in hand, Sarah and Miles followed to Marcus' bedside. He listened, with a smile of amusement and satisfaction to the account of Ermatinger's defeat. Then, at a nod from Narcissa, Miles made his announcement. Marcus stared at the young man as if he could not believe his ears.

"You have given up your citizenship! You are planning to be married by a priest! I am astounded and disgusted!" Marcus' great voice could have been heard in the Indian village. "Look you, young man, this young girl was placed in my care by Sir George Simpson. I am her guardian until she comes of age or he removes me. If you think, for one minute, I'll consent to her sneaking off with you in this haphazard fashion, you don't know me, that's all. And if you think I'll consent to her being married by a priest, you don't know me either! Let Sir George send me his written consent, then I'll have Spalding or Walker down here for the wedding."

"But, Doctor," cried Miles, "Sir George is at Montreal! As soon as I can get to him with Sarah, we're to be sent to England. You're wrecking a year's plans by your obstinacy."

"Am I?" shouted Marcus. "And how do I know that you're not wrecking a girl's life by your selfish desires. What I say is final, Miles Goodyear!"

"Then we'll act without your consent!" exclaimed Miles. "Come, Sarah!" dragging that gasping young person with him out into the night.

"Go after them, Narcissa, quickly!" ordered Marcus.

Narcissa shook her head. "You can't coerce young things in love, Marcus! We've done what we can for Sarah."

The doctor jerked himself to a sitting posture and dropped back in a faint. Narcissa ran to his aid.

But Sarah was not in immediate need of Narcissa's help.

"What are you thinking of doing, Miles?" she protested, as the rain swept into her face.

"I'm taking you to Fort Walla Walla!" he cried.

Sarah turned quickly into the open door of the schoolroom. "What a silly-billy you are!" she exclaimed. "One minute you act as wise and cool as a man of forty. The

next minute, you're like a child, crying for a toy. How can I go off for a twenty-five-mile ride dressed this way?"

It was dusk in the schoolroom. In the dim light, Miles jerked his head impatiently. "A man's not expected to be reasonable about love. Get on your wraps, my darling, and let's be away."

Sarah calmly lighted the candle on the teacher's desk. "I'm going to do as Dr. Whitman tells me to," she said. "I want a wedding and a pretty dress. If these dear Whitmans don't want me to be married by a priest, I'm not going to be. They've done too much for you and me, Miles, for us to leave them in this shabby way."

"You don't love me, Sarah Hall!" cried Miles.

"Don't I?" asked Sarah. "Didn't you leave me without sign or word all these months and didn't I wait for you, my heart aching all the time? Now you come dashing back and expect me to defy these dear kind friends—Alice Clarissa's mother—" Suddenly Sarah's girlish voice broke.

"Don't, Sarah, don't!" Miles threw his arms about her. "I tried to get word to you, truly I did! Darling, tell me you love me! Tell me!"

"I love you, dear, dear Miles!" kissing him between each word. "But, oh, Miles, I wouldn't be worth loving if I didn't put my best friends' wishes first."

"I know," whispered Miles huskily. "You're right! Only, I'm just so madly in love with you—and all my plans are made—made by the Governor, Sarah. This will turn them all upside down."

"Did the Governor tell you to take me, overnight, to Père Demers, like you planned, Miles?"

"No-o!" replied Miles, reluctantly. "He said to let Mrs. Whitman arrange matters. But, you see, that struggle with the wagon threw me three days off my schedule. And Sir George is such a wolf about promptness. I thought—" His voice trailed off miserably.

Sarah kissed him again and the two clung, cheek to cheek, a lovers' silhouette against the candlelight.

"You will go get the letter from Sir George, will you not, Miles?" whispered Sarah. "And come back for me? As if I were not just a half-breed, but some one worth taking trouble for?"

Miles suddenly put her from him and looked into her face, intelligence dawning in his eyes. "Oh, I see!" he murmured. "I see what you and the doctor mean." He lifted his hat from the desk. "I'm starting right now! Supper at Fort Walla Walla at midnight." He kissed her and rushed out of the door.

Sarah, tears running down her cheeks, stood beside the candle, listening for his horse's hoofs. They came and paused before the schoolroom door. Miles rushed in and lifted her in his arms.

"Good-by, my darling little sweetheart! You are right! But, oh, Sarah, it's killing me to leave you! It's like cutting out my heart and leaving it at Waii-lat-pu."

Sarah clung to him, sobbing. And Miles put his lips to her ear—

"Good-by, dear little *bonne!* I shall travel these trails as they were never traveled before. Kiss me once more! One that I'll feel on my lips till I get back to you!"

A long moment of silence, and then a slamming door and the sound of galloping hoofs.

Sarah blew out the candle.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLE JOINED

MARCUS made only a slow recovery from his injury. It was a month before he was able to resume his usual activities. Fortunately matters at the mission were in an unusual state of quiet. There was, of course, constant friction with the Indians, but as Umtippe did not return, there was no outbreak. The Whitmans were much puzzled by the old chief's non-appearance, until a letter from Miles to Sarah told that he had met the Cayuse at Fort Walla Walla and was taking him to Rupert's Land that the old chief might get an idea of the power of the "King George men." Good politics, remarked Miles, and also a method of safeguarding the mission, which contained the whole of his heart!

They heard in June of this year of 1840 that Jason Lee had returned by ship with a large group of Methodist missionaries. Marcus tried all summer to find time for a visit to the mission on the Willamette, but his hands were too full. His mind too, for Spalding's activities among the American Board missions were so continuous, that it required all the kindliness and finesse which Marcus possessed to keep the various missions from open controversy. In spite of his and Narcissa's efforts, William Gray and Cornelius Rogers left Lap-wai and during the year resigned from mission work entirely and set up farms for themselves. Smith, shortly after, was forcibly driven from his mission by the Indians, incited to this overt act by Père Demers, Smith insisted. He stopped at Waii-lat-pu for a time, a disappointed man with broken nerves. After a time,

stimulated by the Whitmans, he departed for the Sandwich Islands.

Although for many months after Alice Clarissa's death, Marcus stoutly maintained that he was indifferent to Spalding's machinations, he was obliged, after listening to the reports of Gray and Rogers, to admit that there was real danger to the prestige of the American Board missions in Henry's petty maneuvers. The Methodist missions, specializing more and more in the salvation of the whites and less and less in that of Indians, seemed to be far more harmonious in their inner workings than those of the American Board. To be sure, Jason Lee had been obliged to dispense with the services of the notorious Dr. Elijah White, and that amorous gentleman had returned to the United States to the immense interest and edification of the Columbia countryside.

But, in spite of this, the mission on the Willamette was prospering inordinately, both in this world's goods and in political prestige. Narcissa, with a jealous ache in her heart for Marcus, admitted that Jason Lee was the greatest organizer among the Americans in Oregon. It was the Methodist mission that, while the American Board missions were contending among themselves, sent two petitions to Congress, begging it to form a territorial government in Oregon. And it was the mission on the Willamette which kept in close touch with Commodore Wilkes when, with American gunboats, he entered Puget Sound on an exploring expedition. Marcus, overworked as a physician, inadequate as a savior of Cayuse souls, too greatly burdened as a source of supply for his own household and for the unattached and itinerant missionaries who constantly percolated through the mountains, toiled, always beyond his strength; and it seemed to Narcissa, herself overworked, that always his toil was fruitless and futile.

The Cayuse were restless and sullen. The few notable

exceptions could not hide this fact. Nor could their readiness to take all and more than the Whitmans could give them of care and sustenance blind Narcissa, at least, to their contempt for the givers of the endless gifts. It was obvious that, as the popularity of the priests on the Columbia increased among the Indians, the unpopularity of all the Protestant missionaries increased also.

In spite of all the comings and goings, Waii-lat-pu was as solitary as an island in the Pacific. Spalding's constant aspersions on Narcissa's character had a dampening effect on the friendliness of the other missionary wives, and the Hudson's Bay factors shunned the mission as though it were a pest station. This was, to Narcissa, the final touch of loneliness. Miles' letters to Sarah constituted the mission's most cheering contact with the outer world. The first one, after he reached Norway House, contained an enclosure from Sir George Simpson.

"Dr. Marcus Whitman,
Waii-lat-pu Mission,
Oregon Territory.

My Dear Sir:

I am pleased, herewith, to sanction the betrothal of Sarah Hall and Miles Goodyear. You were quite right in refusing to allow to take place the hasty marriage urged by young Goodyear. I am sending the impetuous young man to London for the remainder of the year. Next year, on his appearing at Waii-lat-pu, I shall be happy to have you arrange the marriage of the two in whatever way you may think suitable.

I remain, my dear Doctor,

Your obliged s'v't,

George Simpson,

—Governor of Rupert's Land, etc.—"

Sarah wept tears of mingled joy and disappointment over this letter. She had not really believed Miles' declaration that the marriage would be postponed for more than a year. But, after a day or so of moping, she settled to her studies and tasks with good grace. She was preparing for a future more ambitious than she would have dreamed of divulging to any one but Miles.

Early in 1841, Ewing Young sent for Marcus. The erstwhile "bandit" was now a successful stockman in partnership with the Methodist mission, though still an outlaw as far as the Hudson's Bay Company was concerned. He was a desperately sick man before he sent for Marcus and, although Marcus traveled at top speed in a canoe manned by four Indians, Young died before Marcus reached him. But Marcus attended the funeral and returned to Narcissa with several interesting facts to relate.

Ewing Young had died possessed of a considerable property; and after the funeral, the some thirty odd white men who had attended it went into session to form a provisional government and to appoint civil officers who could administer estates, record marriages, births and deaths. The officers had been appointed, but, Marcus reported, Dr. McLoughlin had brought bitter opposition against the forming of a government. In this he was abetted by Commodore Wilkes, who had so strongly advised against such action that the attempt had been dropped.

"But why does the Commodore oppose it?" asked Narcissa.

"He says to wait until Congress acts," replied Marcus. "But he has become very intimate with Dr. McLoughlin. So we all can judge just how unbiased his opinion is! Narcissa, I wish I could do something to further the American cause here. It's terrible to think how much time and strength I have given to Spalding's childish bickering,

and how little I am doing for this other matter. Can't you make a suggestion?"

Narcissa shook her head. "The time will come, Marcus, and when it comes we'll be ready for it."

She spoke in such tones of conviction, even of prophecy, that Marcus was more than half satisfied. He drew a deep breath and gave one last bit of gossip before returning to work.

"A Yankee ship, loaded with barrels of rum, arrived last month and anchored off Fort George, ready for trade with the Indians. Dr. McLoughlin went out and tried to persuade the skipper to go away, but, of course, that didn't work. So he bought the entire stock of rum and destroyed it."

It was Narcissa's turn to draw a deep breath. "Marcus," she said slowly, "Miles is right. They know how to govern."

Marcus nodded as he repeated her words. "They know how to govern! But," he added, as he picked up his hat, preparatory to beginning the day's routine, "but they shall not govern Oregon, nevertheless."

The year 1841 ground to an end, prosperously as far as the physical welfare of Waii-lat-pu was concerned, but with an ever-increasing sense of isolation and of despair over Indian obduracy of character. Early in 1842 came a letter from Miles, announcing that Governor Simpson would set out, in March, for a trip around the world, that he probably would reach Fort Walla Walla in June, and that then the wedding would be celebrated.

Sarah Hall had long since decided that Henry Spalding was to perform the marriage ceremony. She disliked him, she explained to Narcissa, but he had baptized Alice Clarissa and had buried her. No one else could unite her to Miles. Narcissa kissed her and understood. All during June they awaited word from Miles. Henry Spalding ar-

rived about the middle of the month, but it was not until the last day of the month that Miles arrived.

Narcissa and Sarah were in the schoolroom working with the primer class when faintly from the west trail sounded a skirling of bagpipes:

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Ah, page, brave page, what tidings
From my true lord bring you?"

The two women, suddenly white of cheek, looked at each other. Then Narcissa dismissed the class and she and Sarah ran toward the west gates. Silhouetted against the pale green of wheat and the pale blue of snow-wreathed Mount Hood, a gay line of riders approached the mission; the pipers at the head, followed by Miles in scarlet coat, bearing the British flag, with H. B. C. on its folds. Then Sir George Simpson and Dr. McLoughlin, ruffles fluttering in the wind, then Archibald McKinlay and Frank Ermatinger, followed by a dozen voyageurs in feathered hats and fringed tunics. Marcus, in calico shirt-sleeves and collarless, hurried from the milking-shed, as Sarah and Narcissa swung open the gates. Henry Spalding came running from the Indian village, where he had been attempting to hold service.

It was just within the gates that the company dismounted. Sir George bowed over Narcissa's hand.

"The wedding guests are here, madam, and not too belated, I hope!"

"Not as long as you bring the bridegroom, Sir George," replied Narcissa. "Dr. McLoughlin," turning to the magnificent white-bearded figure towering behind the Governor, "it is good to see you again. We have missed you."

"I have missed you, madam," bowed the Chief Factor, kissing Narcissa's hand. "I was glad of the excuse that

brought me here. Bless my soul, is that pretty thing little Sarah?"

"Yes! I'm so proud of her!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Isn't she lovely? Sarah, won't you spare a glance for any one but Miles?"

Sarah, as pink as her calico frock, came forward and made a curtsy that included the whole company. Then Miles, with the laughing excuse that he must show the bride her ring, led her into the house. It was very evident, thought Narcissa, that an occasion was to be made of Sarah's wedding. She was glad that her larder was well stocked and that the wedding cake was mellowing under Mrs. Munger's guardian eye.

"Come into the house to supper, gentlemen!" cried Marcus. "We've food for a regiment!"

"You perhaps exaggerate our appetites, doctor!" said Factor McKinlay.

"Not mine!" declared Sir George. "Madam Whitman, will you not permit the wedding to take place while supper is preparing? I must leave Fort Walla Walla at dawn to-morrow and will be glad if this task, pleasant as it is, takes but a couple of hours."

"Certainly, if you so wish it," replied Narcissa, not to be outdone in urbanity.

She allowed Marcus to lead the Governor, with Dr. McLoughlin and Archibald McKinlay, into the parlor, while she hurried in search of Sarah.

In the parlor, the little group of men, with Miles and Henry Spalding standing by the center table, waited in almost unbroken silence for the bride's appearance. She wore, when at last Narcissa brought her in, Narcissa's own wedding dress, brought down to Sarah's size.

"Oh, you are lovely! Lovely!" exclaimed Miles, impetuously, as he took her hand. Dr. McLoughlin began an elaborate compliment, but Henry Spalding interrupted.

"Dearly beloved—" he began abruptly, and there was instant silence in the room.

Narcissa, standing beside Marcus, was moved, as a woman always must be, by this most moving ceremony of human life. And yet, she was acutely conscious of the drama suggested by these men gathered in the mission parlor. Sir George stood with his gray eyes on Spalding's sallow face, something sardonic, something infinitely sad in his expression. He was on his way around the world. What delicate and invaluable thread was he about to weave into the British fabric of empire, she wondered. And what fatal turn had he been able to give to her and Marcus' destiny before leaving on a journey that would take him away for two years from the control of immediate events in Oregon? He was not a man to make idle threats. Narcissa was certain that he would not have come back to Waii-lat-pu, even to Sarah's wedding, had he not been convinced that he had already defeated the mission cause. It was with a mingled sense of wistfulness and defiance that her glance turned from the Governor to Dr. McLoughlin.

The Chief Factor was not looking either at the clergyman or the bridal pair. He was eyeing Sir George as a watchdog eyes one whom he trusts but does not like. It seemed to Narcissa that there was something less arrogant, even less sure of himself in McLoughlin's bearing than had been there when she first knew him. She wished she could know what had happened to the White Headed Eagle on that trip to London.

Marcus slipped warm, work-roughened fingers around hers and she looked up at him with a smile of trust and affection. Here, at least, she could rest without suspicion or fear.

"—And God keep you in mutual love and understanding!"

Spalding closed his prayer and suddenly, to Marcus' vast

amusement, kissed the bride. A moment later, Mrs. Munger announced supper.

It was after this very gay meal, during which the pipers, stationed in the dooryard, played Scotch airs to a throng of enchanted Cayuse, and during which Marcus and Dr. McLoughlin vied with each other in telling stories of outlandish bridals they had known: it was after this that Narcissa, slipping away to finish Sarah's packing, was accosted in the schoolroom by Sir George.

He took Sarah's books from Narcissa, then detained both her hands in his.

"You are wondering why I came, and with this retinue," he said, abruptly.

"Yes!" Narcissa returned his gaze clearly.

"It was necessary," he said, "to make Dr. McLoughlin understand the importance I attach to this wedding."

"And to make us feel," added Narcissa, with a little smile, "that your threats are about to be realized."

"Yes!" exclaimed Sir George, his tanned cheeks flushing. "I come to beg of you, Narcissa, once more, and for the last time, to leave here while yet you can do so with colors flying. *You are not to be permitted to continue here.* For God's sake, go of your own volition and while McLoughlin can still control the Cayuse."

"Ah!" breathed Narcissa, her eyes very wide and very blue in the candlelight. "I knew as much! . . . Sir George, I cannot go!"

"Cannot? And why?" watching her intently.

"All that has been best in my life has died and is buried here in Oregon. Even the old ache for Angelica has been replaced by deep preoccupation with what has come to me here—come and gone. I have no desire to run from my destiny, Sir George. And you know, quite as well as I, that Waii-lat-pu is my destiny."

The Governor drew a deep breath. "And are all your

dead buried under the cottonwoods yonder, Narcissa?"

For a moment Narcissa feared that she was going to weep. All her dead? Dear God, no! Only the dearest flesh of her flesh lay in that little grave heaped over with rock against the wolves. She choked back a sob and, looking into Sir George's face, she answered him in a low voice.

"All my dead?" she said. "When my every waking hour is haunted by dead thoughts, dead dreams of what might have been, dead passions and dead mad hopes, none of them ever to know the decency and peace of burial? Look into your own soul, Sir George, and answer your own question."

"But what shall you do, Narcissa? What shall you do? I shall never see you again, perhaps. Will you not give me some assurance of your safety?"

"You have done your duty, you tell me," returned Narcissa quietly. "You must not ask me to do less than mine."

Sir George slowly relinquished her hands and, looking suddenly unutterably weary and unutterably overburdened, he turned away from her and returned to the noisy dining-room. And, after a moment's battle with herself, Narcissa picked up Sarah's books and carried them to the bedroom where, pink-cheeked and star-eyed, Sarah awaited her.

The bride was dressed in a dark blue riding habit. Her belongings—there was no large amount of them—were packed on the waiting pack horses. One after another, the company bade Narcissa farewell, mounted and followed the pipers out the gates onto the starlit trail.

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
But when will he return?"

. . . Dimly the silver mirage of Mount Hood and faintly, more faintly, voices and pipes blending:

"Malbrouck has gone a-fighting,
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine,
And so we sing the glories
For which great Malbrouck bled!"

Leaning on the gate, Narcissa strained her eyes after those far diminishing figures until Marcus' hand on hers roused her and she went in to help Mrs. Munger clear up the remains of the wedding feast.

They missed Sarah every hour of the day, even though those hours were filled, as they never before had been, with work. Mrs. Munger gave birth to a little daughter in July and so Narcissa was deprived, not only of Sarah's assistance, but, for the most of the summer, of Mrs. Munger's as well. But she was glad that every waking moment was full.

One September afternoon, Trapper, now grown to a sedate doghood, announced as clearly as dog could, that strangers were coming along the east trail. Narcissa, at work in the schoolroom, as usual, gave no heed until Marcus called her from the dooryard; then she hurried out.

A long trail of packhorses and oxen, led by a man on horseback, was halting at the great gates. Men, women and children slid from their mounts, and as each emaciated beast was thus released of its burden, it dropped with a groan to the ground. The leader, a bearded man with rather a heavy cast of feature, strode up to Marcus.

"I am Dr. Elijah White," he announced. "I've been appointed sub-Indian agent by the American Government, and I've come out to investigate Indian conditions. I've brought with me a hundred and twenty immigrants, who want to settle on the Willamette. We are almost starved. What can you sell us?"

"We can't *sell* you anything, according to American

Board ruling," replied the doctor. "But we can give you some good fat steers to butcher, fifty bushels of potatoes and enough flour to give you all a couple of bakings of bread. Camp your folks down there by the cottonwoods near the mill."

Dr. White turned to the exhausted immigrants and reported Marcus' offer. There was a feeble cheer. Beasts were kicked to their feet and Marcus eagerly led the way, while Narcissa, half carrying a woman with a new-born babe, brought up the rear.

It was night before the Whitmans ceased ministering to Dr. White's forlorn cavalcade. When, however, every one had been fed, Marcus asked White for news from the States.

"And come to the house while you talk, doctor," Marcus suggested. "I know my wife is tired and the confusion here is awful. We aren't used to many folks around, you know."

"Be glad of a little peace and quiet, myself," ejaculated Dr. White. "Let me bring Amos Lovejoy along. He's a Boston lawyer who's made this trip out of curiosity. He's a smart fellow and can tell you more than I can. I'll bring your letters, too."

He appeared shortly in the mission parlor, with a tall young man, dark of hair and eye, who sighed with pleasure as he sank into one of the buffalo-hide chairs. Dr. White gave Marcus a little bundle of letters, which Marcus laid aside to be read when his guests should leave.

"What's Congress doing?" he asked. "What's England doing about Oregon?"

"Lord Ashburton and Daniel Webster are completing a treaty which will settle the boundary question before Congress adjourns next March," replied Lovejoy.

"What is to be the boundary of Oregon?" asked Narcissa.

"Report has it," said White, "that England will possess everything north of the Columbia."

"But Congress will never ratify such a treaty, surely!" cried Marcus. "They can't plead ignorance of the possibilities of Oregon now, after the work Lee and my old traveling mate, Parker, have done."

"You'd think half of them never heard of Oregon," replied Lovejoy. "I did hear that Jason Lee had presented some petitions to Congress and men like Representative Cushing of Massachusetts and Senator Linn of Missouri are strong advocates for our holding all we can of the territory. But there are politics within politics. President Tyler himself is said to want to give Great Britain all north of the Columbia down to 36° 30′. You see"—rising and pointing to the map—"that will give us San Francisco and Monterey. I understand that Lord Ashburton, after much advice from a certain Sir George Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Governor, has implied that England would agree to such a decision. Mexico is really just a dependent colony of Great Britain now, financially speaking."

"I want California, all right!" exclaimed Marcus, "but I want Oregon too. There's no logical reason for our not having both. If Daniel Webster and President Tyler only knew what they were relinquishing!"

"They must know," said Dr. White. "My heavens, I've talked my head off in Washington! But Congress is too much for them. And after all, when it comes to making the treaty, we haven't got much standing. We claim this section by right of discovery. Well, maybe we did discover it, but England, through the Hudson's Bay Company, has done all the real work on it. She's got the voters here, unless my caravan will overbalance them."

"But surely, Mr. Lovejoy," said Narcissa, turning to the lawyer, "you are not reconciled to our giving up this great section?"

"No, I'm not reconciled, but I think we're helpless and had better be satisfied with what we can get by compromise. By March, Congress will have ratified the treaty."

Marcus suddenly brought his fist down on the table. "I'm not satisfied!" he shouted. "I'm going to see Jason Lee at once and put my shoulder to his in forming a real American government here. We'll see if that won't put a spoke in England's wheel when she comes to take over."

"You're too late for that to help," said Lovejoy. "You'd better be philosophical about it, Dr. Whitman. And now, I know you wish to get at your letters. If you'll excuse us, Mrs. Whitman, we'll take ourselves off to bed."

"There are many things I want to ask you about," replied Narcissa, "but I know you're very tired. I'll ask them in the morning."

The two men bowed themselves out, leaving Marcus excitedly repeating:

"I'll not be reconciled without a fight, Narcissa! I'll not!"

"Nor I," agreed Narcissa. "If it were spring, I'd say we ought to send a petition to Secretary Webster at once. But with winter coming on—"

"A petition!" snorted Marcus. "Why, Jason Lee's been presenting petitions and memorials and entertaining explorers ever since he settled on the Willamette and what good has it done?"

"Helped educate the public more than we can realize, I suspect," replied Narcissa. "Marcus, read your letters from the American Board."

Marcus took the missive from Narcissa, broke the seal and read the letter aloud, then dropped it on the table, while he and Narcissa stared at each other as if paralyzed.

The American Board ordered the closing of the missions of Lap-wai and Waii-lat-pu.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARCUS WHITMAN'S RIDE

THE blow had fallen. The apprehension, the uncertainty, the sense of impending disaster that so long had haunted Narcissa, these were ended now in certainty. Mingled with her anger and grief over the letter was a curious feeling of relief. At last the battle was joined.

Marcus looked at her, unseeingly. "Close the mission!" he repeated. "But we can't!"

"Certainly, we can't," agreed Narcissa. "The Board has no idea of what it's doing. It's been systematically deceived, first by Henry Spalding, then by Sir George or his agents. We've Henry to thank for the fact that the minds of the Board were entirely prepared to believe the worst of us. You see, the letter says that the dissensions among our members have undermined our usefulness. They were ready to explode when Sir George touched the trigger!"

Marcus drew a long breath. "Narcissa, if our missions are closed, Oregon will go Catholic. Lee can't, alone, outweigh the priests. The Board, even after all I've written them, doesn't understand that."

"And if it goes Catholic," added Narcissa, "it also goes British. Marcus, let's get William Gray to take charge here while you and I go to Boston next spring and make the Board understand."

Marcus' somber eyes brightened, then he shook his head. "The Board would be so angry at the expense of such a trip that we'd defeat our own purpose."

"That's true," agreed Narcissa. "I'll give up any thought of going. That halves the expense at one blow." She

tapped the table with thoughtful fingers, her eyes on the dying fire.

"I must call a meeting of all the members as soon as possible," said Marcus.

"Yes," Narcissa nodded, "but we must have a plan to present to them." She rose and began to pace slowly up and down the room.

How to meet the crisis adequately; how to turn the evil which had befallen them to a great good, commensurate with the suffering and sacrifice of the years. Her answer to this, Narcissa told herself, would prove whether or not she and Marcus were failures, not only as missionaries—and she was willing to grant that as such they had not succeeded greatly—but also as citizens and as pioneers.

Marcus had begun to write his notices of the meeting, when, with a little cry of excitement, "Oh, Marcus! Marcus!" Narcissa took the quill from his fingers and caught both of his hands in hers. The doctor looked up, startled by her unusual vehemence. Her blue eyes were burning, her cheeks vivid.

"Marcus, don't wait for spring! Go now, over the route that William Gray and Frank Ermatinger took, then the winter storms won't matter so much. Go now! But go first to Washington and tell the President and the Secretary of State what they are giving away with Oregon. I know Jason Lee has done what he could, but, Marcus, you do more! See President Tyler, see Daniel Webster! Make them understand. Don't wait for spring, Marcus! Oregon will belong to England by then!"

Still holding Marcus' hands, her lips and voice quivering with excitement, Narcissa gave him no chance to reply, though he jumped to his feet, eyes blazing.

"Then go on to Boston, Marcus, and make the Board see that, though we have few converts, we stand here as outposts against the advance of the Jesuits. They will respond

to that. I know those men! Oh, Marcus, do this! Do this and I will feel to you as I've never felt before."

Marcus caught his breath and suddenly pressed both her hands against his heart. "You mean," he whispered, "that success such as that would make you love me?"

"I can't promise that, can I?" asked Narcissa, half tearfully. "But Marcus, I cannot love where I cannot look up to a man. You never have fulfilled the unconscious promise of bigness you made to me. Oh, Marcus, fulfil it now!"

A great light suddenly flooded Marcus' mind. Still holding his wife's hands against his heavily beating heart, he stood silent for a moment, while new understanding and new purpose welled high within him. Then, as if he were making a holy vow, he bowed his great head and murmured:

"I'll fulfil it now, so help me God."

The next day White started on toward the Willamette with his weary train. Lovejoy, however, did not go with him, but remained at Waii-lat-pu to rest and to answer Marcus' and Narcissa's innumerable political queries. He was interested keenly in the doctor's proposed trip and to the delight of both the Whitmans he volunteered to accompany Marcus on his journey.

Marcus had set the earliest possible date for the meeting. On September twenty-sixth, Walker and Eells, Spalding and Gray, gathered at Waii-lat-pu. The meeting was a long and a stormy affair, with the bitterness of resentment and chagrin of all his confrères turning against Henry Spalding. Marcus, Gray, Eells and even the gentle and diffident Walker, spoke their minds freely and at length on Spalding's share in the catastrophe.

Henry, at first, attempted to combat them, but only at first. The fact that his machinations had turned into a boomerang for his own destruction had a most wholesome

effect on the combative clergyman. And at last he wept, acknowledged his sins and begged for forgiveness.

From that moment the meeting held a more hopeful tone; and when Gray suggested that a joint letter be written to the Board, telling of the reconciliation and asking that the stern orders for disbandment be reconsidered, the suggestion was made a motion and carried unanimously.

It had required the best part of two days to reach this point. It was nearing supper-time of the second day when Marcus said quietly:

"I'd like to present that letter in person to the Board!"

There was a gasp of surprise and disapproval.

"You cannot return to the States without the consent of the Board!" declared Eells.

"Your mission will be destroyed by the Cayuse if you leave it," said Walker. "You know very well that they only await opportunity."

Narcissa, who had, as the rules of the society required, remained silent hitherto, now broke her silence.

"I will stay here and carry on the mission work," she said. "Let the doctor go."

"Yes, let him go!" cried Henry Spalding. "He will plead for us as our letter cannot."

"If I go"—Marcus spoke carefully—"I shall visit Washington and try to see the President and Secretary of State. Perhaps it's not too late to make them want to keep Oregon, instead of swapping it for cod-fishing banks."

His words roused a storm of protest, the burden of which was that he was a missionary and not a politician, that the Board would never consent to his performing such an errand and that he was not to waste his energies as Jason Lee had wasted his.

Henry Spalding, however, to the Whitmans' surprise, stuck persistently to Marcus' side. Gray, too, after a few moments of thought, said with a chuckle:

"Down with the Hudson's Bay Company! Go ahead, doctor, I'm with you!" Then he buttonholed Elkanah Walker and began so vehement an argument with that gentle soul that Walker literally threw up both hands and half groaned:

"Doctor, do anything you wish! Go to Sitka, while you're at it and persuade the Russians to give us the coast as far as Behring Straits!"

Every one laughed at this, and with the laugh Cushing Eells capitulated, adding as he did so a word of warning.

"Do you fully realize your danger, doctor? I've heard that the Sioux are on the warpath against the Flatheads. So you can't go through Flathead country."

"If I can't go that way, I'll use the Oregon Trail," replied Marcus, coolly. "If I start within a week, I'm sure I can get through the Rockies before the big snows come."

"Shall you go with only Indians for company?" asked Gray. "That's never wise."

"I know," replied Marcus. "But I'm very fortunate. Mr. Lovejoy has agreed that if I go, he'll go back with me and help me to bring out a train of immigrants next spring; selected, religious folks who will settle near our respective missions."

"I ain't going to hold supper another minute," said Mrs. Munger, putting her head in at the door. And the men, laughing, followed Narcissa to the dining-room.

Innumerable details of Marcus' trip were discussed during the meal, and many suggestions were made for safeguarding Narcissa during his absence. Because of poor Asahel's mental instability, it was necessary to find another man to stay at the mission. At first, it seemed as if it would be very difficult to find any one, but finally it was decided to ask a young man named Geiger, an old friend from Angelica, who had settled on the Willamette, to bring his wife and take charge of the mission farm. And each of the

missionaries volunteered to visit Waii-lat-pu as frequently as possible. There was much discussion of what Marcus should say to the American Board, and many messages for relatives and friends.

When supper was finished, every one fell to writing letters to be intrusted to the doctor, and until late that night only the scratching of half a dozen quills disturbed the quiet of the house.

The next day, the visiting missionaries hurried back to their stations, and Marcus plunged into preparations for his departure.

His greatest anxiety was over what Umtippe might be inspired to do during his absence. The old chief had been in wretched health for the past year, too ill, in fact, for mischief. Under Marcus' care, he had improved sufficiently to be able to leave, late in September, for the Salt Lake country, where he always spent the winter. If he lived to return in the spring,—Marcus shuddered each time this thought returned to him. What the old Cayuse would do in the spring, when he learned that the doctor would be absent until fall, was a matter on which Marcus dared not speculate.

Narcissa pooh-poohed at his fears and worked furiously to complete two sets of double-weight flannel underwear for the doctor. The dog, Trapper, observing the extended preparations for a journey, barked and panted and followed Marcus about all day. Observing this, Narcissa said the evening before the doctor and Lovejoy were to leave:

"Marcus, I wish you'd take Trapper with you. I'd feel better if you would. He's a splendid hunter and a wonderful trail-finder. He'll be as useful in many ways as a man."

"But, I couldn't hope ever to bring him back to you, Narcissa," protested Marcus, deeply touched. "And he's so dear to you because of baby."

"It's because of her I want you to take him. She loved him so. I have the most curious feeling that she and Trapper both will be guarding and guiding you. Won't you, Trapper?" turning to the dog, who stood between the two in an agony of interest, his eyes fixed now on Marcus and now on Narcissa, tail wagging, tongue slavering. "Won't you, old dog?" repeated Narcissa.

Trapper rushed to Narcissa and dropped his head on her knee, while he stared up at her with adoring, brown eyes; then he hurried over to Marcus, pawed at Marcus' high boots, and barked.

There were tears in the doctor's eyes as he laughed.

"I'll take him, dear!" he said and went on, soberly packing his saddle-bags.

At dawn the next morning, October third, Lovejoy mounted his horse and, leading the two pack-mules, started slowly along the east trail, thoughtfully leaving Marcus and Narcissa alone for their last farewell. Marcus folded Narcissa in his arms and gave her a long kiss. He was beyond speech. Narcissa clung to him as one clings to a life raft, then she summoned all her courage and thrust him gently from her.

"God keep you for me, Marcus," she whispered.

Face working, he turned to his horse, leaped into the saddle and spurred him toward the great gates. Trapper barked joyfully and followed. Narcissa stood in the doorway, until the mists of early morning swallowed the tiny cavalcade.

It was four hundred miles to Fort Hall. The Blue Mountains were already well snow-covered, as was most of the upland country over which the Oregon Trail twisted and turned. It was a far better marked trail than it had been six years before, and for that and for many other reasons they made much better speed than had been made

on that earlier journey. They reached the fort in eleven days; that is, in ten days of travel, for Marcus would not move on Sunday.

Changes, as Marcus knew, had taken place in the management of the post. Captain Thing had been replaced by Captain Grant, a cordial, pleasant-mannered Englishman who, however, had bad news for Marcus. The Pawnees and the Cheyennes, he said, were on the warpath, and his trappers were hurrying in from the east to save their fur pelts and their lives. Three trappers coming in, on this first evening at the fort, corroborated what the factor had said and added that a terrible winter was impending. The hair on pelts never had been so thick, buffalo and deer were deserting well established winter grazing fields and were moving rapidly down to lower levels, and already snows in the mountains had attained at least two-thirds of their ordinary winter level. They laughed at Marcus when he told them he planned to reach St. Louis that winter. No white man, they declared, could live through such an undertaking.

Sitting around the roaring fire in the trading store, Marcus and Amos Lovejoy discussed the matter at length with Captain Grant and the trappers, the two Americans becoming every moment more convinced that to go east or north was impossible. On the wall across the room hung a map of the western half of the continent, a duplicate of the map Narcissa had borrowed from Fort Walla Walla. Marcus, during the discussion, jumped to his feet and, taking a candle, went to examine this map. To the south of Fort Hall, parallel forty-two was indicated; below this, west to the Pacific and east to the Arkansas River, all the territory was labeled Spanish Mexico. Except on the west coast and to the south, where Santa Fé was indicated, with Taos just above, the map showed no settlements or trails.

Two forts were marked on the east side of this Spanish-Mexican territory, Fort Uinta and, southeast of this, Fort Uncompahgre.

"How far is it from here to Santa Fé?" asked Marcus, of the room at large.

There was a sudden pause in the conversation round the fire. Men looked from Marcus to the map, and from the map at one another. A half-breed Spanish trader, humorously known as Don Pedro, finally replied:

"Must be a thousand miles. It cannot by any means be traveled in winter. Are you a stranger to our winters?"

A general guffaw greeted these remarks. Lovejoy joined Marcus before the map.

"I was wondering," explained Marcus, "if we couldn't reach Santa Fé by way of those two forts, Uinta and Uncompahgre, and on down the Rio Grande, to Taos and Santa Fé. By Santa Fé trail to St. Louis would be no trouble at all."

Before Amos could reply Don Pedro strode across the room. "Look!" he cried, sweeping a brown hand down the east side of the map. "Here are the worst peaks in all the Rockies, terrible ranges, awful rivers, even in summer. In winter, ice, snow, storms—"

"Hold on! Hold on, Don Pedro!" shouted Marcus. "Let's talk facts. How would you go through in summer?"

Don Pedro studied the map, during which process the three trappers and Captain Grant joined the group. Finally, after much deep breathing and muttering, the Spaniard pointed to a north-and-south lying range of mountains to the east of Great Salt Lake.

"You go down Bear River valley to the lake. You go south along the east side of the lake, to about here. Then you turn northeast to a pass in this great range, a terrible pass. You work up here, out of Spanish territory, to Bridger's fort. From Bridger's fort you go south into the

Uinta Mountains. There you find the headwaters of the Uinta River. You follow this river south till you come to Fort Uinta."

"But why go clear back up to Bridger's fort?" asked Lovejoy.

"One always does," replied Don Pedro. "From Fort Uinta you follow the White River till you cross the valley, here."

"No you don't, my friend," interrupted a French trapper. "You go up to Green River."

"What does a sack of paper like you know of this Spanish country?" demanded Don Pedro, calmly. "You leave the White River here and cross a range and there you find the Grand River. This you follow to the Uncompahgre valley and find, at this point, the fort. From here you work southeast, to seek through most terrible ranges the headwaters of the Rio Grande. This stream found, you follow it to Taos and Santa Fé."

"And you say I cannot do it in winter?" asked Marcus.

"Never," declared Don Pedro.

"But I say he can!" cried a new voice. A young Nez Percé pushed his way up to the map. "My father went through there years ago. He had heard of wonderful white strangers in a hot winter country. All declared he could not do it. But he did. More than that, he did it again and took me with him. I can guide you, doctor! I will—"

A chorus of hoots and imitations of cock crowing drowned the Indian's last sentence. He strode angrily back to the fire. Thither Marcus followed him, took him by the shoulder and led him again to the map.

"Come, be a friend, Jo!" begged Marcus. "And you too, Don Pedro! Trace a trail for me as carefully as you can."

It was nearly midnight before, with fierce argument between themselves and constantly interrupted by questions

from Marcus and Amos Lovejoy, and by suggestions and criticisms from the others, Don Pedro and Jo marked a trail on the map Marcus drew from one of his saddle-bags. It was the copy Narcissa had made long before on linen, of the Fort Walla Walla map.

Before the two Americans rolled in their blankets near the fire that night, Jo, the Nez Percé, had agreed to guide them to Santa Fé. And had Jo agreed to take them into Hades, it would have caused no more derision and been looked upon as a no more insane exploit. Marcus would not for one moment admit, even to himself, that the average of chances were not in his favor. To be sure, his impulsiveness had led him to make the decision, but sober thought did not suggest that he retreat. He had a physician's knowledge of his own extraordinary physical endurance. For years, his medical calls had been giving him training in traveling under terrible conditions. He believed that a cool head, warm clothing, an ax and plenty of ammunition would see a man safe over the worst trail.

For a moment he had been troubled about Amos Lovejoy and, before they slept that night, he told the young lawyer that he feared he hadn't the strength for the journey and suggested that he return to the Columbia. But Lovejoy, even in this short time, had developed a fanatical faith in Marcus. He wished to go with him. He very much desired that Daniel Webster be told, by a man like Marcus Whitman, the truth about Oregon. And he believed that two men had a better chance to get to Santa Fé than one.

It was necessary to give Jo time in which to make ready for the trip. So they put in the following day resting, studying the map and asking questions on geography of the Indians and trappers. At dawn on the second morning, their thirteenth day out from Waii-lat-pu, they set out from Fort Hall, with Jo and three pack-mules, to say nothing of Trapper, who was obviously enjoying every moment

of the expedition. There was no snow in the valley, but the hills through which Narcissa had wandered six years before were deep with it and the Bear River was frozen.

They made rapid progress through the Bear River valley, with its long reaches of marsh lands, where they shot enough duck to keep them in meat for two weeks. When they reached the mouth of the Bear, they turned due east, toward the Wasatch Mountains, and here, as they reached an elevation of seven thousand feet, the thermometer dropped and their first blizzard overtook them. They were fresh, however, and took this first serious encounter with winter, jovially. The snows were deep, but they made the crossing of the Wasatch range without great difficulty and descended into the valley that separated them from the Uinta Mountains, a full day ahead of the schedule marked out by Don Pedro and Jo. Their supplies still were ample, so they did not swing north to Bridger's fort but made directly for the headwaters of the Uinta River, to the southeast.

The whole country had now taken on a winter aspect. The valley which they were crossing had an elevation of nearly seven thousand feet and was covered by a foot of snow. The mountains that hemmed it in were heavily timbered, but the valley, save for the willows that fringed its many brooks, was barren. They found many deer and antelope trails as well as wolf, and as they began the climb into the Uintas, Trapper had an encounter with a porcupine and held up the party for an hour, to Jo's disgust, while the doctor extracted the worst of the quills from the dog's lips.

The peaks of the Uintas ran up to something over thirteen thousand feet, and the pass that Jo found for them was well over nine thousand. Fortunately, none of the three leading the reluctant horses and mules through the

heavy drifts knew this. They only knew that they were very high because breathing was difficult, the cold intense and Lovejoy's nose bled. They crossed the pass at noon and swung to the right, down a precipitous mountain side, to search for the headwaters of the Uinta River. Jo promised them that Fort Uinta was now not more than two days' travel away. But on the morning of the day that should have landed them at the fort, a heavy snowstorm and zero temperature greeted them. They struggled on by compass for a few miles, then Jo shouted in the doctor's ear:

"Must camp! My horse is lame! Lovejoy is sick with cold." Reluctantly, as always, Marcus agreed to the halt. He grudged every moment of daylight that was not spent in travel. The knowledge that he was working against time drove him like an overseer's lash. In the serene warmth of a Washington October, he told himself, Lord Ashburton and Daniel Webster, with a supine Congress, were mulcting the nation of an empire. And only he and Lovejoy, held by the fury of a blizzard in the Rocky Mountains, it seemed to him, were lifting a hand to prevent the irremediable loss. He wished now, very poignantly he wished, that he had done more to uphold Jason Lee's hands during the years. He might have accomplished much. And he wished too that he had had time to advise with Lee before leaving on this mad journey.

The blizzard held them in camp for three days. When it ceased and they started on their way, they were obliged to break trail through six feet of snow. They took turns at this, a half hour to each horse and rider. It was exhausting work to man and beast and they were five days in reaching the Uinta River, instead of two. This rapid stream was only partially frozen and by following its bed they were able to make speed. In forty-eight hours, they staggered up to the gates of a tiny log fort and were wel-

comed by its astounded owner, one Roubideau, a French trader from St. Louis.

Roubideau begged them to spend the winter with him, although with the tiny fort aswarm with French and Spanish trappers with their squaws, it was difficult to discover where three more human beings could have been stored. But the French trader's plea was based on something other than fear of the weather. He was expecting an attack at any time from hostile Utes and would be glad of the help of the newcomers to combat it. Also, with Utes on the warpath, he cheerfully prophesied that a trio of scalps would depend from some Ute belt a day after the travelers left his fort.

Marcus laughed. "Come! Come! You can't frighten me by dangling scalp-locks! I've lived among the Cayuse too long. Sell me some tea and jerked beef, Brother Roubideau and let me awa', as the Scotch say."

"Your friend needs rest, Doctor, if you and Jo do not!" The trader jerked his head at Amos Lovejoy, who was shielding his frosted face from the heat of the fireplace.

"I am perfectly well, except for the frost bite," declared Lovejoy as Marcus looked at him anxiously. "How many days to Fort Uncompahgre, Monsieur Roubideau?"

"Only the Good God can tell you that in this weather," replied the Frenchman. "Maybe three hundred miles. In summer, perhaps three weeks. Now—" he shrugged his shoulders.

"Then let's waste no time in thinking about it, Doctor. My frost bites feel better in the wind than before a fire, I do assure you." Amos grinned cheerfully.

"You've got the makings of a trapper in you, monsieur!" exclaimed Roubideau. "Come, I'll give you a good meal and set you on your way."

On their way, indeed! Jo led them slowly but surely to the Green River, which they crossed at a ford where the

rush of water carried horses and mules off their feet, and Trapper, howling with fright, scrambled from the icy current to the top of a mule pack, where his hair instantly congealed in a thousand icicles. But with braying of mules and whinnying of horses, they all scrambled ashore through broken ice cakes and after infinite difficulty, got a fire of driftwood going and dried their frozen clothes. Then on east to the White, a tributary of the Green, and along the White for three comparatively easy days, then south, following a small creek flowing into the White.

They were passing now through canyon country, where the streams had worn the great levels into a thousand winding crevices, on the brinks of which the horses halted, sweating with fear. Lovejoy, weary and strained as he was, halted many times a day to exclaim over the weird beauty, the fiendish cruelty of the landscape. Peaks and canyons of orange, purple, black and vermilion, now half veiled with snow, now swept naked by the unending winds, took the place of the strange blue valleys and the bronze-green, spruce-clad slopes of the Uinta range.

"Gorgeous country!" shouted Amos, above the wind, a dozen times a day to Marcus.

"Can't compare with the country round Waii-lat-pu!" Marcus would reply invariably, his inward eye envisaging each time, Narcissa with a fur-draped cradle beside her, and Mount Hood behind her. Strange how the years since the baby's death had become as nothing!

After a few days, canyon country began to give way to ranges rising higher and higher on the east. The directions on the map told them to keep west of these ranges, and still work south. But the eighth day after leaving Fort Uinta, they came upon the body of a trapper, horribly mutilated. Jo pronounced it Ute work and declared in favor of moving into the ranges at once. They gave the stock a last good

feeding of the grass still to be obtained in the valleys by scraping away the snow, and turned abruptly east.

Now came two weeks of nightmare traveling, while they fought their way south through the ranges in search of the Grand River to which they had been told the Uncompahgre was tributary. Jo never for a moment admitted uncertainty, but Marcus felt many doubts as to the Nez Percé's knowledge of the country through which he was leading them. The stock began to suffer from hunger, there was little grass, and the bark of cottonwood and willow was poor fodder for animals working as they were. Trapper throve well on cottontails, and the men were comfortable enough as to food. But frightful cold and the climbing in the great elevations wore them down terribly. At every stop now Amos did not exclaim over the beauty of the landscape. Instead, he fell fast asleep, much to Marcus' and Jo's anxiety. They feared the worst for him, should he be separated from them for an hour.

Of Jo, both the white men had grown very fond by the time they had known him a fortnight. He was, as Marcus told Lovejoy with a rueful chuckle, everything that the Cayuse were not; gentle, hard-working, affectionate, and humorous. And, as it turned out, he knew the way to Fort Uncompahgre, for on the morning of the twenty-third day out from Fort Uinta, as they followed the course of a frozen stream toward its source, blue smoke suddenly belched from a snow-bank not a quarter of a mile before them.

"Indians!" ejaculated Amos.

"Fort Uncompahgre!" grinned Jo. "I told you I knew him!"

They urged the tired animals forward. Shortly a chorus of dogs greeted them, and Trapper ran forward to make personal observations. Marcus tied a grimy white hand-

kerchief to the muzzle of his gun and waved it as they approached what at first seemed a huge snowdrift, but which a little later showed itself to be a snow-banked log stockade, with gates closed, and Trapper barking insolent comments before it, to the dogs within.

As the three pulled their horses up the river bank, however, the gates were opened and a short man in a buffalo overcoat came out, his black eyes above his shaggy beard bulging with astonishment.

"Who in the name of God are you?" he gasped.

Marcus explained, while half a dozen trappers appeared in the gateway.

"Come in! Come in!" shouted the trader, midway in the explanations. "My name is Le Bret. You're just in time for dinner. Those cattle of yours need oats, but I can't give it to 'em. But there's plenty of mountain hay stacked in the corral. Come in, gentlemen. Nobody can come from Fort Uinta here in the winter, but I'll take your word for it."

They remained two days with the hospitable Le Bret, eating and sleeping and waking to eat again. He did all that he could to dissuade them from crossing the Great Divide, which he told them separated them from the waters of the Rio Grande. But, in spite of hardships, and exhaustion, their accomplishments so far had been so great, that all three of the travelers were a bit heady. They now were certain that they would win through with no greater sufferings than they already had undergone.

They left Fort Uncompahgre on a brilliant morning in late November, refreshed themselves and with fresh horses, for Le Bret had been willing to take their exhausted mounts in trade. The mules, which still were in fair condition, they kept.

Four days out from the fort, they crawled up upon a verdureless tableland and halted for observation. Behind

them, to the northwest, lay the snow-peaked valley of the Uncompahgre. Before them, to the southeast, lay a vast area of high, sharp peaks, close set, verdureless. By some curious alchemy of the great elevation, the snow that covered them to their crests appeared a brilliant blue of a deep sapphire tone, while the sky behind them was a delicate, translucent green. As they stood discussing the pass which they must discover through these peaks, Jo pointed to a scarcely perceptible vapor rising from the nearest peaks.

"They're making snow. We must get off this butte before the blizzard strikes us."

He urged his horse into the wind. Amos and Marcus, who had learned that Jo was an almost infallible weather prophet, followed without protest, although it was dinner-time. They were two hours crossing the tableland. By that time the peaks were hidden in whirling snow clouds, and, as still heading east, they began to drop down the steep and heavily drifted butte wall, the biting particles of snow were stinging their cheeks. The horses fought persistently to turn their tails to the wind, so slowing down their progress that the three men dismounted, tied the stock nose to tail and, with Jo leading, Marcus and Amos bringing up the rear, they wallowed as best they might to the foot of the butte. Here was a clump of cottonwoods, offering fodder for the animals. Behind a flying buttress of rock they pitched the tent and prepared to wait with what patience they could the passing of the storm.

Three days of impatience spent in beating down the snow around the tent, lest it be drifted completely over, and in keeping a rough corral open among the trees for the stock. Fortunately, there was plenty of firewood; and while Marcus restlessly paced the open space under the trees, Amos Lovejoy crouched close to the fire and wrote his diary and Jo and Trapper curled in the tent and slept.

The morning of the fourth day dawned clear and windswept. They hurriedly broke camp and endeavored to work round the foot of the butte. The snow made this impossible. They agreed to climb back to the top of the butte, cross its top, southward, and try for the south rather than the north pass, through the peaks.

They reached the butte top at noon. And as each man, leading a horse and mule, reached the final level, he threw himself down on the bare, frozen rocks. Such a screaming, fiendish tempest of wind was rushing across the tableland that neither man nor beast could endure it. Without a word, Jo crept back to the trail they had just ascended and the others followed.

Back, once more, in the cottonwood camp, they rebuilt the fire, ate supper and silently went to bed. Something in that sinister wind had depressed them all. But the next day at dawn they repeated yesterday's attempt and, although the wind was still high, it was so much lessened that they crossed the butte and had worked, by sundown, well into the ranges to the south. For several days they fought through the canyons and steppes that characterized the lower reaches of those strange sapphire peaks. The going so fatigued both men and animals that Marcus was obliged to decree two days of rest.

They made camp in a canyon in which there was a thick growth of spruce, with much dried grass under the snow and with a deep little river running beneath thick ice. Trapper at once routed out a jack-rabbit, and Jo, weary though he was, found a fresh deer slot and announced that he'd bring in venison for supper. Marcus made camp, insisting that the exhausted Amos go to bed at once on the pile of spruce boughs he quickly cut and spread in the tent. Amos slept without waiting for food and Marcus sat by the fire listening for Trapper's bark or for the report of Jo's gun.

The afterglow died and the moon rose before a sound broke upon the solitude. It was an unusual and uncanny sound—a low whine from Trapper, who trotted dejectedly into camp and scratched at Marcus' knee.

"What's wrong, Trapper boy?" asked Marcus.

Trapper whined again, and turned back on his own trail with a very evident invitation for Marcus to follow. Marcus picked up his gun and hurried after the dog, his heart sinking with premonition of evil. Not twenty minutes from the camp, Trapper stopped with a howl. Marcus wallowed through the snow to the dark object over which the dog was standing. It was Jo, with an arrow through his heart.

Marcus groaned and looked about the canyon. It was narrow, and there were no trees here, so that the snow was brilliant in the moonlight. He made a short tour, looking for footprints. But as he could find none, he concluded that the arrow had come from the top of the canyon, and this conviction was enhanced by the fact that Jo's scalp had not been taken. Nor should it be, Marcus told himself, fiercely. He hurried back to Jo, got the poor, inert body hoisted onto his own broad shoulders and made back for the camp.

Amos was still asleep. Marcus carried Jo's body to the edge of the river where he had earlier broken a hole from which the animals could drink. Into this hole he silently dropped the Indian's body and the swift current sucked it immediately from sight. He picked up Jo's musket and powder horn and bore them back to the tent.

Marcus was terribly shaken. The implications to be drawn from Jo's sudden taking off entirely overturned the feeling of confidence the past weeks had been breeding in the doctor. There was a hostile Indian in the neighborhood. Perhaps there were several Indians. They were without a guide at the very worst point in their journey.

He dared not try to cross the Great Divide without a guide.

Although he was sure that Jo's murderer had located the camp and that such precautions were useless, he kicked out the fire, then roused the weary Lovejoy and, as easily as he could, told him of the evil that had befallen them. Amos took the news with characteristic calm.

"What do you think it best for us to do, doctor?" he asked.

"We'll take our two days' rest here, then go back to Fort Uncompahgre for a guide," replied Marcus. "I'm sure we'd be able to find our way back."

"Doctor," said Amos slowly after a moment's thought, "you'd better go back and leave me here. I would only hamper you, I'm so done up. Take the best of everything and make the trip as comfortably as you can."

"And leave you at the mercy of the brutes that killed poor Jo, I suppose!" cried Marcus. "No! No, old man!"

"I'll be no more at their mercy than you on the trail," replied Amos. "Be reasonable and not sentimental, doctor. Leave me here, and if the Indians don't 'pot shot' me, I'll be fit as a fiddle for the big crossing. Is your strength equal to such added strain, doctor?"

"Yes," said Marcus, thoughtfully. He knew that Amos' strength was not equal to such a mad, rushing trip as he contemplated. Yet he could not but feel extremely uneasy at the idea of leaving the young lawyer alone. But, as a matter of fact, he had no choice but to agree. "I'll give the horses another day, then I'll start," he said. "That is, if Indians don't finish us! There's no use in trying to keep guard, except for what old Trapper will do. I'm going to sleep, Lovejoy."

Not five minutes later, except for the thud of the live stock's hoofs as they dug the snow away from the sweet, wild grass, there was not a sound in all the camp.

Whoever had murdered Jo evidently had been sated, for

the time being, at least. Marcus slept and ate, alternately, all the next day, and added a twelve hours' sleep the next night for good measure. Before daylight, he was on his way back to Fort Uncompahgre. Trapper was left to keep Lovejoy company.

That was, in a way, the maddest portion of that extraordinary journey. Freed of all responsibility to guide or friend, Marcus made no attempt to find their former trail, which certainly had been erratic enough to be well worth avoiding. He traveled by compass and, contrary to all rules, he kept out of the valleys and well up on the heights from which the eternal winds swept the snows. He suffered intensely from cold as a consequence and froze his feet so badly that he was obliged to abandon his boots, into which he could not thrust his swollen toes, and take to moccasins. These, with their parfleche soles, were so slippery that he crossed all icy stretches, when off his horse, on his hands and knees. Of Indians he saw no trace.

After the first day or so, he slept a good deal in his saddle, so that much of his trip was hazy to him. And yet, on the fourth day he dismounted at the gate of the fort.

It required many hours of cajolery to induce a Mexican, the only possible guide, to go back with him. This man, a native of Santa Fé, was anxious to return to his home, but not at all anxious to undertake the rigors of a winter trip thither. However, when Marcus had agreed to pay him a hundred dollars in gold, he capitulated; and after a single day of rest and with a fresh horse, Marcus started back for Amos.

Amos said nothing in his diary of the loneliness of his long wait in that solitary camp. Yet what a profound solitude it was, and how strange and desolate his situation must have seemed to this city dweller! And he must have wondered, too, if those easy gentlemen in the nation's Capitol could be made to take one whit more interest in

the empire northwest of the Rockies, because of this unbelievable journey. Trapper, during those endless days, must have been more than a human being to Amos Lovejoy.

The meeting between the two men was a silent one. Marcus' frosted fingers would not permit a handshake. Lovejoy put his hands on Marcus' shoulders, and the two men smiled at each other. Then Marcus introduced Juan and fell to work on the venison stew that steamed over the fire. When he had finished this and a rapid account of his trip at the same time, he said:

"We're three weeks behind schedule now. If Congress adjourns early our efforts have all been for nothing."

"We'll make up time when we reach the Santa Fé trail, I'm sure," said Amos. "I'm so fit now that I won't hold you back. But, doctor, you ought to put in a few days here getting your feet in shape."

"Not a minute!" exclaimed Marcus. "My feet aren't so bad since I took to moccasins. We'll leave before daylight in the morning."

And leave they did, just as long streamers of red from the rising sun flared news of the coming day across the sky above the canyon.

Juan was not the gentle, companionable soul that Jo had been, but he was a better guide than Jo, for the simple reason that he knew the country better. He led them unerringly up and up into the high-flung passes of the Great Divide, up and up, until for many days the only sign of living thing, other than themselves, was an eagle silhouetted against the western sky one desolate noon. Less than rabbits, in the blue and white grandeur, they must have seemed to the eagle looking down on them from steady pinions, less than pack rats, moving with agonizing slowness over the purple magnificence that spread beyond the uttermost reach of that eagle's gaze.

Imperceptibly they moved, leaving behind them one of

the mules with a broken neck, clinging to each other, for snow blindness affected them at times. Yet, always moving and never turning back, they saw at last before them, instead of endless peaks, long, snow-choked valleys stretching southward. And they began their descent toward the upper waters of the Rio Grande.

They had had no luck whatever in finding game while crossing the Divide, and had eaten up their store of jerked beef and pemmican. In fact, the last day of the crossing was made without food. They were not worried, however, for Juan assured them that game would be plentiful once they dropped to the river valley. But events proved that, while Juan knew his trails, he could not know that this winter of 1842-43 was to go down in history as one more destructive to wild animals than any since recorded. The cold in the upper Rio Grande valley was almost insupportable. And not so much as a jack-rabbit could they find to eat. They pushed on for another day and then, reluctantly, Marcus killed one of the mules.

And that night a ravening pack of wolves appeared, devoured all of the carcass save the few pieces cooked and in the tent, and disappeared before Trapper's frantic barking and the growls of the wolves themselves could rouse the men from exhausted slumbers.

They pushed on feebly for two days more, and then made camp beside the black ice of the Rio Grande. Marcus dared not move away from driftwood until they had food. With warmth and water death could be stalled off for some time to come. They dared not kill one of their horses. The last mule could be spared only by abandoning all that they had not lost already of their baggage. Juan, who was carrying a bundle of furs to Santa Fé, which he valued at a fabulous sum, was particularly urgent that the mule be spared. For the major portion of the mule's pack now consisted of Juan's pelts.

Marcus respected the little man's desires as long as he dared. But when they had been in camp on the Rio Grande for a day and Amos Lovejoy had become too weak to load his gun, Marcus announced that the mule must be sacrificed.

Juan, squatting with the Americans beside the fire, looked up with a scowl in his ugly, dark face.

"No!" he snarled. "Kill the dog first."

"Good heavens, no!" Marcus shouted, staring at the Mexican as if he could strike him.

Quick as thought, Juan drew his hunting knife and plunged it to the hilt in the heart of the sleeping dog, who lay curled in a gray knot beside the fire. With a back-handed blow, Marcus knocked Juan over, took the knife from him, then seized him by the throat. Weakened though he was, Marcus still was worth three of the Mexican.

With infinite difficulty, Lovejoy staggered to his feet. There was murder in Marcus' contorted face, and the Mexican, without a knife, was as helpless as a child in the doctor's great hands.

"Doctor!" shouted Amos. "Your wife would not have it so. Let him go."

Marcus, without loosening his grip on the choking man, turned his head toward Amos. "That was my baby daughter's dog!" he snarled.

"It won't bring Trapper back to have murder on your hands. Nor it won't help your cause with Waii-lat-pu, nor Oregon," urged the lawyer quickly.

Slowly Marcus took his fingers from the Mexican's throat, turned him and gave him a kick that sent him sprawling. Then he stooped over the motionless dog.

"You don't know all he meant to Narcissa and me," he said brokenly.

"I can guess," replied Lovejoy, quietly. "He was alone with me two weeks, back yonder, remember?"

Marcus straightened himself and looked about him. In

every direction mountains pressed upon them. In every direction, snow and desolation, and the infinite brutality of the wastes.

"I'd like to bury him," he murmured, "but that's impossible. He must go as poor Jo went."

With great difficulty, for his strength was spent, he gathered in his arms the gray body so pitifully emaciated, and staggered to the river bank where a water hole was kept open. He broke the new film of ice and dropped Trapper into the black rush of the current. Then he dragged himself back to the fire and dropped down beside Lovejoy. Amos put his mittened hand on Marcus' shoulder.

"'He should have died, hereafter,'" he quoted, gently.

And this was Trapper's epitaph.

When he had recovered sufficient strength, Marcus shot the remaining mule and forced the still trembling Juan to butcher it. Here was food for many days and, after two days of hearty feeding, they were able to continue on down the river. Behind them, they left as a passing monument to Trapper's burial place, a pile of furs and all their extra clothing, including Marcus' broadcloth coat.

Juan, more anxious than ever to reach his destination, led on with his same unerring skill. The going was frightful and, after the mule meat gave out, they suffered again for food, though an occasional rabbit and once a wolf kept them from actual breakdown. On the fifteenth of December, emaciated, ragged, hungry, they reached the Mexican settlement of Fernandez de Taos.

Here, to Marcus' infinite chagrin, they were obliged to rest for two weeks. Marcus' frozen feet demanded care, and both he and Lovejoy were suffering from snow-blindness and exhaustion. Juan deposited them in a little adobe hotel, from which, had one cared to look, there was a wonderful view of the seven-tiered pueblo dwelling of the Taos Indians. But Lovejoy was too ill and Marcus too uneasy

to give more than a passing thought to this, their first meeting with the Indian of the desert. The Mexican who kept the hotel was a kindly and voluble soul. He fed his guests on peppery dishes, found new horses for them, and introduced them to the priest, who knew no English and less French!

They reached Santa Fé without serious difficulty. This old town was the headquarters of Kit Carson and other well-known plainsmen and Marcus had hoped here to get recent news from Congress. But no one had a word for him. They stayed only a day, then with a new guide swung out on the Santa Fé trail on the last lap of their journey. Eight hundred miles to Westport.

They must travel northeast now, toward Bent's Fort, which was on the Arkansas River near the present town of La Junta, Colorado. The hardships they endured going through the mountains of New Mexico were extreme. Even Lovejoy, in his diary, spoke of the almost unendurable cold and of their despairing of their lives, at one point, where the guide lost the way in a raging blizzard, and only the wisdom of one of the pack-mules led them back to the trail in safety. Still, they made the two-hundred-mile trip in record time. They were nervous about hostile Indians, although their guide assured them that the really dangerous country lay beyond Bent's Fort. But they met no living soul on the trail until they were within four days of Bent's Fort, when a long pack train wound along the trail and its leader drew up and returned Marcus' salute.

He was George Bent, brother of the owner of the fort, en route to Santa Fé with freight. He was much impressed when he learned of their trip through the Rockies, but warned them that it would not be safe for them to attempt the trip between the fort and Westport, Missouri, unless they went with an armed pack train. Such a train was on the eve of leaving the fort, he said, adding:

"If you move rapidly you may overtake them."

Marcus looked at Amos Lovejoy, whose weary face told of an exhaustion his lips would not.

"You go ahead, doctor!" exclaimed Amos. "If I put this horse to the gallop, both he and I will fall to pieces!"

"But to-morrow's Sunday," mused Marcus. "I've never traveled on Sunday. However—" with a sigh, "surely this is justified. I'll not waste a moment, either, in starting." He shook hands with George Bent. "Do you know whether Congress has done anything about the Oregon boundary?"

Bent shook his head and turned in his saddle to wave his arm at his waiting pack train. The last laden mule had not passed out of sight before Marcus had made up a small pack of food and was ready to start.

"Amos, we'll meet at St. Louis in late spring. You know all that I want you to do about notifying folk that I'm ready to lead a caravan out in June. *Tell them to come in wagons!* I'll write you, regularly."

The two men clasped hands, Marcus spurred his horse and was gone. Four days later Amos turned in at the gates of Bent's Fort and asked, at once, for Marcus. He had not been heard of! In consternation, Amos explained to Mr. Savery, the man in charge of the fort, what Marcus' plans had been. Savery at once sent off a messenger to overtake the convoy, which had been delayed in starting until that day, directing them to wait until the doctor was found. Amos took a fresh horse and went out to search for his friend. He had worked nearly a hundred miles up the Arkansas before he found an Indian who told him that the previous day he had directed the doctor to the fort. Back to the fort pushed poor Amos. But Marcus had not arrived. Amos went to bed, his heart full of dark forebodings, yet unable to persuade himself that anything could go seriously wrong with Marcus and his seemingly charmed life.

Nor had there. Early the next day Marcus appeared. He was very tired and worried, but still, he insisted, able to hurry on to meet the waiting convoy. He had lost his ax, he said, and in turning back to seek it, had lost his way.

"All because," he said simply, "I was traveling on Sunday."

It was four hundred miles from Bent's Fort to Westport Landing. Marcus reached there the last of January and delayed only long enough to post a notice that he would be ready to lead an immigrant train, with wagons, to the Columbia, as soon as grass was high enough that spring. Then he went on to St. Louis.

When he arrived there he went directly to the hotel which he and Narcissa had visited six years before. He had no luggage and no money to spare with which to provide himself with luggage. Not that this unimportant detail bothered Marcus. When he entered the little hotel that winter day he wore a buffalo-skin overcoat and fur leggings over boot moccasins. The beaver-skin cap on his head could be supplemented by the fur hood attached to his coat.

Frontiersmen were the ordinary rule in St. Louis then. Still, when Marcus, having divested himself of his coat and cap, drew up to the long dining table, his frosted face and hands drew an immediate fire of questions from his fellow guests. Marcus answered in as few words as possible. He had a question of his own he was burning to ask.

"Has the Ashburton Treaty been signed?"

"Oh, yes!" replied a man whom the others addressed as Dr. Barrows. "That was signed the ninth of August and has been confirmed by the Senate. The President signed on the tenth of November."

Marcus dropped his knife and fork, and his heart sagged within him. Alas, for his great dream; for his superhuman effort! Oregon had been lost before he left Waii-lat-pu!

"Do you feel ill, Dr. Whitman?" asked Dr. Barrow.

"It will pass, thank you," muttered Marcus. "Tell me, if you can, just how far south of the Columbia the Oregon border has been placed."

"Bless you!" exclaimed Dr. Barrow. "How you do flatter our present administration! The only boundary settled was that of Maine! Congress has only got so far with Oregon as to spend months debating the merits of our claims. Some don't want to be bothered with so remote an empire; some want us to cross to the Russian frontier; some want to scrap with Mexico for California. Senator Linn has introduced a bill that will give six hundred and forty acres to every adult settler in Oregon and an additional one hundred and sixty to each child. That's got a lot of folks eager to go out there. But between the Indians and the fact that wagons can't go through, they're hesitating. Still, I understand that a good many are talking of going out there this spring."

Marcus picked up his knife and fork and began to eat. When Dr. Barrow paused for breath, he asked:

"Is there any real information about the fertility of Oregon accessible to the public?"

"Yes, during the last two or three years, the papers have published a great deal that they picked out of the Slacum and Wilkes reports, and Lieutenant Frémont has just reported his trip to South Pass last year. But good Americans don't want to go out there if it's going to be British, and the present administration is doing all it can to discourage immigration out there. What's your idea of the prospects?"

This was the opening Marcus desired. Once more, laying down his knife and fork, he gave the gaping table a short and graphic picture of Oregon, and ended by saying that his friend, Amos Lovejoy, would be in St. Louis later and

would do some pamphleteering to induce a substantial number of immigrants to be ready in the spring for Marcus to lead them westward.

Having completed this statement, he finished an enormous dinner and excused himself. He went, at once, to a barber-shop, and although it was agony to have his face touched, he ordered his heavy beard removed. This was his sole concession to the demands of civilization. From the barber-shop he went directly to the stage and started for Washington.

CHAPTER XIX

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON in March is New England in April. Marcus left his buffalo coat and two of the three suits of underclothes he'd been wearing, at his boarding house, along with his fur leggings. He had never a thought for the broadcloth, rotting on the Rio Grande, even though he'd solemnly promised Narcissa he'd don it the moment he reached St. Louis. Nor was he bothered by the curiosity he aroused in the country streets of Washington. In three months he proposed to be back on the trail again, when his present clothes would be necessary. He had no intention of spending a penny to conciliate the esthetic senses, either of Washington or of Boston.

Congress had adjourned when Marcus reached the capital. But he was not, now that he knew the details of the Ashburton Treaty, perturbed by that fact. He desired to see President Tyler, and the Secretary of State, Daniel Webster. If it was possible he proposed to discover the truth about the pending negotiations with Great Britain. But, alas! Washington in 1843 was no whit different from the Washington of to-day. It was not an encouraging spot for the simple truth-seeker.

Armed with a six-year-old letter of identification from the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions and with his old passport, countersigned by Captain Thing, Dr. McLoughlin and again by Captain Grant, he presented himself at the office of Daniel Webster. And after three days of waiting he was allotted a fifteen minutes' interview. Fifteen minutes in which to save Oregon! Ah, Narcissa, did you have any conception of the difficulties of the

demand you were making? . . . Marcus squared his shoulders, opened the door of the inner office and entered.

At a desk, at the forward end of the room, sat a smooth-shaven, elderly man, with the face of a saturnine old eagle. From beneath shaggy eyebrows, he watched Marcus approach and make his bow.

"Be seated, sir," said Webster.

"I can talk faster if I stand, thanks," replied Marcus. "For six years, I've lived in Oregon territory, on the Walla Walla River. I'm a missionary to the Cayuse Indians. I've come to Washington to tell you that if you give Oregon to England, you give it to the Catholic church and to the Jesuits—to the powers of Hell."

The Secretary groaned. "Another fanatic! I thought, perhaps, you could give me facts."

"I've given you the most important fact," declared Marcus. "But I can add others." He burst into a eulogy of the wonders of Oregon.

Mr. Webster listened for a moment, then interrupted with a terse question. "Is the country west and north of the Columbia River worth going to war with England for?"

Marcus hesitated, then exclaimed, stoutly, "I'd shoulder a gun for it!"

"Humph!" ejaculated the Secretary. "Perhaps you'll tell me how we'd hold Oregon against the British? I am informed that the Hudson's Bay Company has three thousand armed men in its employ in that region, with a marvelous equipment for sending men and supplies through from Montreal. We have perhaps a hundred white men who claim American citizenship. The Indians are favorable to the British and hostile to the Americans. We are cut off from sending men and supplies by practically an impassable mountain barrier, with no means of protecting any pack trains we might hastily equip and send through. I have no patience with these ill-informed folk who demand that we

keep Oregon, as though Oregon were in our possession and we had but to close our fists."

"Have you arranged a secret treaty with England, ceding her Oregon?" demanded Marcus, bluntly.

"And if I had, do you think I could admit it to you?" demanded the Secretary in return. "But I'll give you an answer to that question, impertinent as it is. No, Dr. Whitman, no secret agreement with Great Britain has been reached."

"England has no right to Oregon," said Marcus, doggedly.

"She claims as many rights as we," replied Webster, tartly. "Rights of discovery and occupation. The ownership of Oregon is likely to follow the greater settlement and larger population."

"Which to-day is British!" exclaimed Marcus. "How can it be otherwise when you consider how grossly our Government neglects the interests of its immigrant citizens! The British parliament, long since, extended the jurisdiction of Canada over its citizens in Oregon. They have civil and military protection. We Americans have nothing except what rule o' thumb measures we have taken for ourselves."

"You'll have to ask the Congress that question," replied Mr. Webster. "But this I will say, that as long as I have influence this country will never go to war to increase its territory. That which we have, we'll protect with the last man and the last dollar. But a war of aggrandizement, never! We are attempting an experiment, sir, in democracy, the greatest experiment the world ever has seen of its kind. Our one hope of success is, I believe, in having a country so compact that we can protect it from predatory enemies." He pulled a bell cord behind him and an attendant entered. Webster held out his hand to Marcus and his voice held a kindlier note as he said, "My next visitor is due, sir. I thank you for your interest in this matter."

Marcus took the extended hand with a grim smile. "I wish I could share your sense of gratitude, sir. But I cannot." And he followed the attendant from the room.

The interview with Daniel Webster infuriated Marcus; infuriated and discouraged him. It had seemed so simple, at Waii-lat-pu, this matter of saving Oregon. "Just explain how wonderful Oregon is!" Narcissa had said. Marcus groaned aloud as he strode along the muddy road toward the White House. Explain! Why, he told himself, if these politicians knew that Oregon was Paradise it would have no effect on them! Oregon was only a pawn to them in some complicated intrigue they were carrying on. Think of it! A fifteen-minute interview to pay for those one hundred and five days spent in coming through from Waii-lat-pu. Yet, he muttered, he'd rather do the trip again than have another interview with Daniel Webster. The thing was hopeless! If it were not for Narcissa—! He paused beside a new-planted sycamore and closed his eyes. Narcissa! Narcissa! Such a wave of homesickness for her, and for the beloved mission swept over Marcus that he could only stand and pray that it would not make a weak fool of him, driving him home before his task was done.

"I will not go back to Narcissa defeated," he said, between his teeth, when his prayer was ended. "I will not! God keep her. I dare not think of her dangers, for it unmans me."

Then he strode into the yard of the White House.

He had no appointment here, nor was he going to try to procure one through any Congressman. It was the President's hour for shaking hands with casual visitors. Marcus was in the Lord's hands.

Those were uncrowded days. When the negro door man, his eyes starting at Marcus' appearance, passed him on to an attendant who showed him into a reception room, President Tyler was standing in laughing conversation with a

fashionably attired gentleman who held gloves, beaver and silver-headed cane in one hand, while he shook hands with the other.

Marcus was prepossessed at once in the President's favor. John Tyler was fifty-three years of age at this time, a thin-faced, clear-eyed man, with an aggressive chin and a pleasant smile. "Well! Well!" he exclaimed, turning to Marcus. "You look like a plainsman, sir!" He spoke with a Virginian accent, very different from the hard New England pronunciation of Webster.

"I think I'd only about half qualify to that title, Mr. President," said Marcus. Then he introduced himself, adding, "I've come through during the winter months, by a route they told me no white man could take, for this interview with you, sir. So I shall not apologize for the condition of my face and hands. They, as well as my feet, were frozen."

Marcus was learning! The President's attention was arrested at once. "What route was that, Dr. Whitman?"

Marcus told him. Mr. Tyler's face kindled with interest. "But, my dear doctor!" he cried, "we cannot have you treated as a casual visitor. There are no other callers. Come into my office and tell me what induced you to take such a trip."

His heart beating high with hope, Marcus followed the President into a quiet room that looked out on the budding lawn. There, seated opposite that pleasant inviting face, Marcus poured out his story. It was a long one, for though he touched only lightly on the recent journey, he took the President back to the arrival of the mission party at Fort Hall in 1836 and sketched the history of Oregon since. For a half hour he talked without interruption. At the end of that time he told of the letter and the news that Elijah White had brought and paused.

"And so you and Mrs. Whitman thought that we must be very ignorant of conditions in Oregon," said President Tyler.

"We thought you'd been misinformed," replied Marcus. "We believed it was the intention of the Hudson's Bay Company to keep you misinformed."

"We've had entirely honest and adequate reports of conditions there," said the President. He looked thoughtfully at Marcus. "And can a man of your education and experience really believe that I, alone, can save Oregon?"

"I have little doubt that you and Daniel Webster can and will sign up with England any treaty you desire."

"But supposing the treaty we offer the Senate to ratify is not pleasing to that body," suggested Tyler, "don't you know that my following is not strong enough with either party to whip it through?"

"Perhaps not," agreed Marcus, "but Daniel Webster can handle the Senate."

"You flatter him!" declared President Tyler. "Dr. Whitman, this Oregon question from every angle is one for diplomatic negotiation, and not for threats. If we had more American citizens out there, we could assume a different attitude toward Great Britain. But we have only a handful, and with no wagon route through, I see no prospect that for another generation we could hope to have a real showing of our citizens there. And this question of boundary cannot be kept open for a generation."

"But there is a wagon route through!" cried Marcus. "I've taken a wagon through."

"How much would the Indians leave of a wagon train?" exclaimed the President. "What man is going to trust his wife and babies to a journey like that?"

"I took my wife through," replied Marcus.

"She must be a brave woman," said Mr. Tyler, "and, from what you have told me, an intelligent one, too."

"She's all of that!" agreed Marcus. Then, his face kindling, "I wish she were here in my place. She'd be able to meet your politicians and reply to your objections as I can't. Not that she'd stoop to politics, but she's so clear-eyed, she'd see what you're trying to do."

John Tyler's pleasant face darkened. "You are not complimenting me, sir!"

Marcus threw up his hands. "I beg your pardon, Mr. President! I'm proving that I'm no diplomat, am I not? . . . Will you not tell me this, sir? Is there anything that I can do to persuade you to throw your weight toward keeping Oregon?"

"And how do you know that I'm not doing so?" asked Tyler, with a little smile.

"Because you evade me so," replied Marcus, doggedly. "And that's not right. I've risked my life to come and tell you how, in this instance, I think you should use your great office. I deserve at least a yes or no answer to my questions."

"If you will answer one question fully and honestly from me, sir, I'll answer one from you," returned Tyler with a sudden cynical gleam in his eyes. "Dr. Whitman, what do you expect as a reward if Oregon territory becomes American?"

Marcus started to his feet. His face burned. "Mr. President," he shouted angrily, "why should you insinuate—" then he paused, held by a sudden memory. He did expect a reward. And it was the thought of this reward that again and again had given him strength to go on during those ghastly days in the Rockies. With a quick softening of eye and voice he said, "Yes, I expect a reward, sir! But it is not in land or money or position. It is nothing that Congress nor you nor all the king's horses or all the king's men could give me. What it is—well, you must allow a poor missionary to have his little mystery, too."

The President laughed. "Hanged if I don't like you, Whitman! You must come to see me again."

"But, Mr. President, my question to you!— Will you help save Oregon?"

John Tyler rose and walked slowly toward the window and back again before he replied. "Listen, sir! California Alta, Texas, Oregon; the extraordinarily adroit diplomacy of Great Britain backed by her naval supremacy; a newborn republic weakened by partisan strife and controlled by ignorant backwoodsmen. These are facts. Ponder on them for a moment and then see if you do not realize that it is impossible for me to give you a yes or no answer to your question. I can say only this: If you will look back over my political record you will observe that I've fought always for what I believed to be the welfare of my country, even when it has estranged me from my party and crippled my influence. The questions of territorial expansion under which my administration is staggering are colossal. I shall do my best to solve them for the good of the nation, as God gives me wisdom."

Across the intellectual abyss that separated them, the two men looked at each other clearly. Then Marcus slowly extended his hand.

"I shall say good-by, then, Mr. President!"

"Good-by, Dr. Whitman, I am grateful to you for calling!"

Marcus made his way out to Pennsylvania Avenue and tramped slowly through the mud while he revamped his plans. He was convinced now that the administration was making no effort to keep the country north of the Columbia. Congress could do little until a treaty was given it to ratify. There would be no session of Congress anyhow until next fall. Was it not true that, no matter what sort of a treaty was promulgated, no matter how the statesmen intrigued, the settlement of ownership lay between two things: the

increase of British rights to the exclusion of all other rights in the country or the establishment of sufficient American rights by a sufficient number of citizens to overwhelm the British? Having reached this point, Marcus went to call on the Secretary of War, James Porter. Marcus wanted to petition the Secretary to establish forts along the Oregon Trail. Porter was willing to see Marcus for exactly ten minutes. He allowed Marcus two minutes to state his desires and consumed the remaining eight minutes in asking Marcus questions about the usefulness of cannon in fighting Indians. When his secretary interrupted to announce the next visitor, he dismissed Marcus with an affable wave of the hand.

"Put it all in writing, Dr. Whitman, and I'll see what I can do for you."

Marcus suddenly chuckled as he again found himself on Pennsylvania Avenue. "I'd better have brought that broadcloth suit along, I guess. Won't Narcissa laugh, though! Now, I'll see how quickly Senator Linn of Missouri will turn me out."

He found the Senator at his boarding house and was admitted at once to his room. All the time that Marcus was talking to him the gentleman from Missouri was packing his horsehair trunk, preparatory to leaving for home within the hour. But when Marcus, after fifteen minutes of rapid talk, had presented his problem, Senator Linn dropped a linen shirt with which he had been wrapping a pair of polished riding boots and pointed a finger at Marcus.

"My boy, can you lead a *wagon* train to the Columbia?"

"I can," replied Marcus.

"Can you keep your mouth shut?"

"I can!" Marcus smiled a little, but the Senator was scowling in his earnestness.

"The administration," said Linn rapidly, "is carrying on secret negotiations with Great Britain that will continue for

at least another year. Those negotiations contemplate giving up Oregon north of the Columbia. Speaking in general, Oregon has no friends in Congress outside a very small circle, of which Senator Benton is the leader and I'm a member. Benton, if he doesn't die, will see California Alta a part of the United States. But if Oregon is to be saved to us we must do it ourselves, and there's but the one way. Move American citizens out there till they outnumber the British three to one. Up to the moment of your call, frankly, I didn't see how it was to be done in time. But if wagons can go through *now,* meaning that men can take their families and take up the offer in our land bill—Look here, Dr. Whitman, when could you start with such a caravan?"

"In May," replied Marcus, his eyes sparkling.

"Then you get out of Washington and start things moving," ordered Senator Linn. "Above all things, don't speak of your plans here, and don't mention Benton or me in connection with them anywhere."

Here was a man who spoke Marcus' own language. With flushing cheeks, Marcus straightened his shoulders and picked up his fur cap. But before he could leave, Linn put his hand on the doctor's shoulder.

"Dr. Whitman, if you can deliver us out there, this fall, a thousand persons, we'll do the rest. Can you do it?"

"Yes, I can!" shouted Marcus. "But not if you keep me here all spring, talking!"

Senator Linn burst into a roar of laughter. "Good enough! I've been hearing of you for years out my way, Doctor! I know now why they all had confidence in you. God speed you!"

With a grasp of the hand that almost burst Marcus' swollen and peeling fingers, the two men parted.

Marcus rushed back to his boarding house, seized his buffalo overcoat, stuffed the underwear in one pocket and

his shaving outfit in the other and within the hour was on his way to Boston.

He reached there on the morning of April fourth and went directly to the offices of the American Board. As luck, good or bad, Marcus could not guess which, would have it, a meeting of the Prudential Committee was in session, with the Board's Secretary, Mr. Greene, in the chair. An astounded office boy admitted Marcus.

"Dr. Whitman, from Oregon!"

Marcus bowed and the members of the committee stared. Mr. Greene was the first to recover his breath.

"Dr. Whitman! But what are you doing away from your mission without permission."

"But my mission was ordered closed by the Board! I came to protest in person. Gentlemen, you must not close these missions. You must not recall Henry Spalding."

"Must not! Tut! Tut, Doctor! That is hardly the way to speak to this Board!" exclaimed Greene.

Marcus looked round for a chair and sat down. It seemed to him incredible that, knowing the distance he had come, knowing the dangers and difficulties of the most ordinary trip from the Columbia country to the United States, it seemed impossible that Greene and his fellows could greet him as though he were a schoolboy playing hookey from the neighboring seminary. But his sense of humor got the better of Marcus' wrath.

"It couldn't have happened anywhere but in Boston," he told himself, grimly, and then he answered Greene, quietly. "If you'll allow me to explain, Mr. Greene. It's a long story."

"You may begin it," said Greene, grudgingly.

So Marcus began the Iliad of Waii-lat-pu.

The sounds of Boston's traffic jouncing over cobblestones roared through the windows. The spring sun crept from the east window upward, disappeared for an hour and re-

appeared through the skylight above the long committee table. And Marcus' voice did not cease all that time. After the first few sentences, the look of disapproval left the faces of the committee men, leaving them rapt, almost awe-struck. For though Marcus did not at all realize it, his story was built around Narcissa: around her sacrifices and her sufferings, her courage and her endeavors. This was not the political story he had told to President Tyler. This was the intimate story of the mission, with all its weaknesses and all its strength.

At noon he paused, weary of speech. He had brought them through the burial of Alice Clarissa.

Secretary Greene drew a long breath and wiped the tears from his cheeks. "Brothers," he said, looking at the red-eyed group around the table, "will some one move a vote of confidence in Dr. Whitman and Mrs. Whitman?"

"I move," said one of the members, brokenly, "that Dr. Whitman go back to Waii-lat-pu and stay there and that if he feels confident that Brother Spalding has been sufficiently disciplined, to keep him from making further trouble, he be told to go on with his splendid work at Lap-wai."

"Let's put it in the form of a resolution," suggested another voice.

Marcus suddenly rose. He had told his story in a steady voice, keeping himself steeled for the battle he felt sure was coming. The sudden change in the attitude of the committee utterly undid him. He bolted from the offices and wandered in the streets until he had himself again in hand. Then he returned to complete his report and to receive the resolutions of the committee.

. . . . . .

By the last of April, Marcus had completed his work in Boston, had paid a flying visit to Narcissa's home and his own, had traveled through central New York, spreading

the gospel of Oregon, and was back in St. Louis to put in action his plans for gathering together a great immigrant train.

It was a tremendous task. Amos Lovejoy had worked well, putting out circulars and acting as a bureau of information; but there was still an enormous amount of work to be done. Marcus had not the slightest intention of leading into Oregon an unorganized rabble of men and boys, half tramps, half adventurers, as would be the case if he did not enforce certain rigid requirements on persons who desired to travel in his caravan. Men with families and farming experience were what Marcus desired; men who had the means to struggle through two or three seasons of unproductiveness, while their farms were coming into bearing. More than that, he wished for men of intelligence, who on reaching Oregon could take immediate part in the struggle for possession.

To any one but Marcus Whitman the difficulties of carrying out such a program in less than a month's time would have seemed insurmountable. The matters of wagons alone seemed, at first, to doom the experiment to failure. People were convinced that one could not go through to the Columbia with covered wagons. Marcus lectured. scolded, and wrote, always on the text of his own experience, until he grew utterly weary of the word Conestoga.

And then, a week before the time appointed for the start, when only a few straggling families had appeared at the appointed rendezvous near Westport, Missouri, Marcus was laid down with an acute attack of malaria. He did not actually give in to the disease until the very day he was to have left St. Louis. Then he fainted and was put to bed, where he lay, neglected and alone for three days, for Lovejoy had left for Westport early in May.

Marcus knew that every moment of his delay was injur-

ing the prospect of success for the migration. Men, even the hardiest and most aggressive, dreaded that trip through Indian country with their wives and children to protect. Unless he were there to hearten them, to keep them together, Marcus knew the party would break and scatter. The scarcity of news was almost unendurable. It was a long way in 1843 from St. Louis to Westport, the present Kansas City. Marcus, from his sick bed, could get no authentic report of his caravan. At last, when his fever had been reduced sufficiently for him to sit erect without fainting, he left the hotel and crawled aboard a river steamer for Westport. At Westport, he made his way to the stables where he had arranged for a riding horse.

The livery man looked him over sympathetically. "Gawd, Doctor, been having a wrestle with the shakes, eh? Well, the folks is waiting for you out yonder."

"Many of them?" asked Marcus, clambering with difficulty into the saddle.

His horse, fresh from long standing, immediately bolted up the road, but Marcus looked anxiously back for his answer.

"More'n you'll ever get to the Columbia!" shouted the livery man, waving his hand.

Marcus allowed the horse to gallop the two miles that lay between the village and the rendezvous, which was beyond the bluffs, that lined the river to the northwest. At the foot of the first of the bluffs he met a horseman who gave a great shout at the sight of Marcus. It was Amos Lovejoy.

"Hurrah! Doctor, I've been worried! You've been sick, I see."

Marcus nodded. "Got enough folks to make a caravan, out there?"

Amos gave him a curious look. "I can show you better than I can tell you, Doctor. Come up here a moment!"

He spurred his horse up the long slope of the bluff. Marcus followed. At the top both men pulled up.

"Look!" exclaimed Amos, pointing across the river.

And Marcus looked.

At the foot of the bluff flowed the Missouri, brown and slow-moving. Beyond the river stretched the May prairie, on and on, into the remote blue heavens. Along the farther bank of the river was stretched an immigrant camp, hundreds of little tents set in crude street formation, and, at the end of the street, a gigantic circle of canvas-covered wagons. Swung out across the prairie were great herds of grazing horses and cattle.

Marcus stared unbelievingly.

"They're waiting for you, Doctor," said Amos Lovejoy, softly. "There are a thousand men, women and children, with a herd of nearly three thousand head of stock."

"They've come!" repeated Marcus unsteadily. "They've come, that many of them! Amos, do you realize that if I can bring that city of people safe into Oregon, it will absolutely swamp the Hudson's Bay Company, and Oregon is ours?"

Amos nodded. "Senator Linn was out here with Senator Benton the other day. They were speeding Lieutenant Frémont on an exploring expedition out Taos way. They expected to see you. When they saw that crowd down there I thought they'd go crazy. They pounded each other on the back and they'd have kissed me if I'd been you! Senator Benton told me to tell you that if you got them out there by fall you'd save Oregon."

Marcus did not speak for a moment. Then he straightened his sick body in the saddle and looked up at the exquisite blue overhead.

"God, I thank Thee!" he murmured and, turning his horse, he spurred him down the bluff-side toward the waiting camp.

CHAPTER XX

THE BARGAIN WITH UMTIPPE

THE caravan started on the twenty-second day of May, 1843. We shall not try to follow it as it sweated its ten miles a day across the plains. To do justice to this, the first of the great western migrations, would require a book of many words' length. To Marcus the trip was an old story though the shepherding of so huge a flock was novel.

"Travel! Travel! Travel!" was his constant cry, as he rode up and down the long, long line of plodding oxen, of footsore horses and milch cows. "Travel! Travel! Or winter will overtake us in the Rockies and then, God help us!"

He was scout for the caravan as well as physician. He was adviser-in-chief as well as lay preacher, and his leadership was as difficult as it was many-sided! He had selected his party for its sturdy intelligence and it was correspondingly headstrong and independent. Not that any member of the caravan rebelled at following Marcus along the trail, for in this matter every one had entire confidence in him. But early in the trip something very like a crusader sense began to develop among the immigrants. The men and women who urged their tired oxen and footsore horses through the choking alkaline dust were not undergoing the torments and hazards of this trip merely to take up land in the Columbia River valley. They were going to take that valley from the British! And gradually a militant note crept into the camp-fire talk that troubled Marcus. He believed that only by keeping friendly relations with the British could Oregon be won. But the men who stood

guard over the fires, who watched the herds under the starlight, began, before Fort Laramie was reached, to talk of ousting the Hudson's Bay Company by force of arms.

The leader in this line of talk was a Missouri man by the name of Jesse Applegate, a fine, upstanding citizen of exceptional virility and intelligence. He was particularly bitter against the Hudson's Bay Company and was determined that the immigrants should take up land north of the Columbia, and in the vicinity of Fort Vancouver. If he had his way, the loose formation of the caravan was to be tightened into close order, after the Blue Mountains were crossed, and if Fort Vancouver showed a hostile front Applegate was all for attacking it.

Marcus liked and admired the Missourian, but he did not agree with a single one of his ideas regarding Oregon. He wished the immigrants to go directly to the Willamette and help form a provisional government that should at once take over the civil and military control of the territory. But he wished this to be done by votes and not by bullets.

Day in and day out, as he and Applegate rode at the head of the winding column, they debated this question, but as far as Marcus could see all that came of the debates was an ever-increasing determination on Applegate's part to defy him and an ever-growing hold of Applegate on the imagination of the immigrants.

And so it moved on into the fastnesses of the Rockies, this grimly purposeful company of Pilgrim fathers, urged by a racial instinct that carried it uncomplainingly through parching desert and tortuous canyon, westward and ever westward, heckled by marauding Indians and enormous wolf packs, menaced by terrible streams, and paying daily toll to the disasters that lurked in every mile.

. . . . . .

On the same day in May on which the caravan left Westport, Narcissa returned to Waii-lat-pu from a round of

visits on the Willamette. She had been wretchedly ill most of the winter with a cold that refused to wear off, even when the warm weather of spring appeared. Under William Geiger's efficient management the mission farm had prospered greatly, but Narcissa had been able to do but little teaching; and in February, when traveling became possible, the Geigers persuaded her to go to the Methodist mission and put herself under the care of the doctor there.

He diagnosed her illness as one of the mind rather than the body and prophesied that if she'd stay away from the anxieties and alarms of Waii-lat-pu for a couple of months, she'd get well. This proved to be the case, and Narcissa returned to the mission in her old exuberant state of health.

During all these weary months, Narcissa had had no word from Marcus. Not that she had expected any. Nevertheless, the thought of him was with her constantly. She had heard, through Captain Grant, of his mad undertaking in seeking a south trail and she knew that he had reached and left Fort Uncompahgre safely. Beyond this there was no word. During the vast loneliness of the winter months she used to wonder how she had had the courage to send Marcus on so dangerous an errand. Certainly had she known of his prospective change in route, she could not have done it. The awful responsibility of what she might have done to Marcus weighed on her mind like a nightmare. And she began to long for his safe return as the one great desire of her life; longed for it, without regard to the success of his undertaking; longed for Marcus, her housemate and the guardian of her hearth.

Immediately on her return, Narcissa took up her neglected teaching and clinical work. She also arranged by letter that Elkanah Walker, Cushing Eells and Henry Spalding should each give Waii-lat-pu one week of religious meetings each month until Marcus should return.

William Geiger tried to dissuade her from making this

arrangement. "You'll start trouble, I'm afraid," he said. "They were pretty good, all spring, with you gone and nobody nagging them about religion. Why don't you let up on them until the doctor gets back?"

"I promised the doctor I'd do this," replied Narcissa. "The priests have been baptizing some of our converts. Doctor will be frantic."

"Some one will have to die to save us from the Catholics," said Asahel Munger, darkly.

"Oh, no, some one won't," contradicted Narcissa cheerfully. "Mr. Munger, I want you to build a platform and pulpit under the willows near the grist mill. We'll hold the protracted meetings there, with big bonfires at night to attract the Cayuse."

Asahel looked pleased and his gloom disappeared as it always did when Narcissa gave him a task.

The first meetings were held during the last week in July, under the auspices of Elkanah Walker. Henry Spalding held the second set of meetings during the last days of August. Henry had visited the mission during the winter and had made himself both useful and pleasant. He was haunted by the fear that Marcus might not be successful in his attempt to save Lap-wai and was meek in proportion. The fear had increased greatly by August, and then even Mrs. Munger admitted that he was an acquisition to society!

"That cantankerous old mule is acting just like a human being!" had been her amiable expression.

Although the buffalo season was on, at least a hundred Cayuse appeared at Henry's meetings; and at the last session of all an unexpected guest appeared in the person of Père Demers, who seated himself quietly in the rear of the congregation. Umtippe sat well forward and told his beads during all the exercises.

This bead-telling was, as Umtippe intended it should be,

a source of great irritation to the whites, especially to Asahel Munger. Henry insisted, wisely, that to ignore Umtippe was to punish him. But poor, unstable Asahel could not concur in this. And at the end of the last prayer he flung himself from the platform on top of the old chief, shrieking as he did so:

"Crucify the red Judas! Crucify him!"

Instantly the quiet meeting turned to a maelstrom, with a hundred Indians shouting and struggling to lay hands on Asahel. Narcissa, the Geigers, Henry and Mrs. Munger stood on the platform staring at one another in consternation for a moment. Then, just as William Geiger was about to plunge into the welter, the crowd about Umtippe scattered and the old chief emerged with Asahel struggling in his grasp. He had bound the carpenter's hands together with a leather belt.

Silence fell as Umtippe smiled benignly. "Now," he said, jerking his head toward the bonfire, from which a red glow lighted his face and turned the willow leaves above to gold, "now I'll do to him what the white squaw did to my beads," and he began to push Munger toward the flames.

"Oh, let's help him!" screamed Narcissa, rushing from the platform toward Munger.

"Stop!" thundered a new voice.

It was Père Demers.

"Free that heretic, Umtippe!" he shouted.

Umtippe dropped Munger instantly. And as instantly poor crazed Asahel lunged forward to the fire and thrust his manacled arms to the elbow in the bed of red hot coals.

"No Catholic fiend can untie my hands," he shrieked, and fainted, rolling into the flames.

Geiger was the first to reach him. Utter confusion followed. The Cayuse shouted and threatened but Père Demers held them in check, while the whites carried

Asahel to the hospital room and there ministered to his terrible burns.

When she had done all that she could for him, Narcissa went out into the dooryard where a few of the Indians still were gathered around the priest. It was moonlight and Narcissa thought that the three hundred acres of harvested fields looked like a wide lake of pale gold. Père Demers left the group of Cayuse and came forward to speak to Narcissa.

"How is the unfortunate man?" he asked.

"He is beyond mortal help, I'm afraid," replied Narcissa. "At least half his body is scorched to the bone."

"I meant to save him," said the priest, looking at Narcissa as though he expected her to doubt him.

She nodded, then added gently, "God knows what He is about with you and poor Mr. Munger."

"We have seemed to cross each other's paths in a tragic manner," murmured the priest. "Madam Whitman, it was not chance that led me here to-night. I had a very special message for you."

"Yes?" Narcissa drew a quick breath of alarm. She could not trust this man, although she had a curious intellectual liking for him.

"Dr. McLoughlin is to be at Fort Walla Walla to-morrow and he would like an interview with you. His stay is short and he begs of you a very great favor, that you ride in with me to-night that he may not be delayed. His old enemy, the gout, makes traveling torture to him."

Narcissa stared at the priest, whose face, all silver and black in the moonlight, was absolutely expressionless. It was not an unreasonable request, and yet—

"I'm sorry," said Narcissa, "but Asahel Munger is a dying man. He and his wife have grown very dear to me. I cannot leave here until he is finished with his agony. If

Dr. McLoughlin cannot wait, and he thinks the matter worth it, I'll follow him to Fort Vancouver."

Père Demers shook his head. "That will not do. The matter is immediate and urgent."

"Curious!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Matters are never as immediate as all that on the Columbia, my dear Père! You mustn't let Dr. McLoughlin's regal manner excite you."

The priest made a gesture of impatience. "I have no authority to give you a hint but I will say this much. The errand has to do with your husband's welfare."

"With Marcus!" ejaculated Narcissa. "What has happened, Père Demers?"

"I don't know," replied Père Demers.

Suddenly terrible forebodings filled Narcissa's mind, the culmination of all the wretched anxieties of the winter and spring. This, she told herself, was exactly as the priest wished her to feel and she, helplessly, was responding to his suggestions. But Marcus! dear, careless, faithful, high-thinking Marcus! Could it be that Dr. McLoughlin, after all the years of isolation the Hudson's Bay Company had forced upon them, was making a friendly gesture?

"Is Dr. Whitman in danger?" asked Narcissa. "In such danger that I must leave my friend to die alone?"

"I do not know," replied the priest.

Again deadly fear clutched at Narcissa's heart. "Wait!" she said. "I will talk to Henry Spalding."

She turned and entered the house.

Henry sat in the dining-room, gazing gloomily at the flickering candle.

"This is a ghastly thing!" he exclaimed, as Narcissa entered.

"We can only pray for the poor soul's release now," agreed Narcissa. "Henry, I want your advice!" And she repeated to him her conversation with Père Demers.

Henry clutched the table with both hands and leaned so

far forward that the candle almost scorched his chin. "Something must be going wrong with Marcus! You'd better start right away for the fort, Narcissa."

"And leave poor Asahel?" exclaimed Narcissa.

"He's beyond your care. There must be something to this, for Dr. McLoughlin to send such a message. I'll go with you if you wish."

"I do wish it," said Narcissa, with a sense of relief that almost made her smile. Henry as a chaperone and guardian appealed to her sense of humor. "I can be ready to start in a very few minutes, if you'll see to the horses and tell Père Demers."

That was a strange trio traversing the moonlit trail that sweet August night. At first they rode in silence. But silence for any length of time was torture to Henry Spalding and this was a heaven-sent opportunity for him to wrangle over religion. He began by asking Père Demers why he believed in celibacy for the priesthood. The discussion that ensued lasted for hours and hours. It outlasted the moon and continued through the black hour before the dawn and, as the sun rose gloriously it was waxing furious, with Henry losing his temper and saying stupid, impertinent things and the priest imperturbable, so greatly Henry's intellectual superior that, Narcissa thought, Henry must bore him to distraction.

When the gates of the fort opened to them, Archibald McKinlay welcomed Narcissa with a little embarrassment, she thought.

"This is decidedly unceremonious, Madam Whitman. But Dr. McLoughlin can't put his foot into a stirrup."

"The lack of ceremony doesn't matter!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Is my husband dead? Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

"No! No!" cried McKinlay. "Why, what can Père Demers have said to you? I don't know what the White

Headed Eagle wants of you, but certainly it's not to break that news to you. Will you rest, Madam Whitman?"

"Not until I've seen Dr. McLoughlin, thank you," replied Narcissa. "How soon can that be?"

"As soon as you have breakfasted," answered the factor.

Relieved of her worst fear, Narcissa ate a good meal, then was led to Dr. McLoughlin's room. The Chief Factor was sitting with a bandaged foot on a stool.

"I can't rise, Madam Whitman," exclaimed McLoughlin, pointing to his foot. "Will you accept my apologies for that and for asking you to come to me?"

"I'll forgive you gladly if only you'll tell me, without further mystery, what has happened to Marcus."

"Just close that door, madam, then, so's we can speak without an audience."

Narcissa complied, then seated herself opposite the Chief Factor. She was wearing the same riding habit with which he had grown familiar on that memorable visit to Fort Vancouver in 1836. Her face was a little thin and worn, yet she was wonderfully unchanged. But the six years might have been twelve, to judge by the ravages in Dr. McLoughlin's face. He leaned forward suddenly and said:

"Madam, a Snake Indian came in yesterday from Fort Laramie. He had a letter for you and I took it upon myself, after hearing the news, to ask you to come in here. This is your letter."

He gave Narcissa the usual oilskin packet. It contained an unsealed fold of paper on which Marcus had written:

"Fort Laramie, July 14, 1843.

DEAR NARCISSA:

Arrived here in safety. A.B.C. agreed to all our requests. All is well.

MARCUS."

Just for a moment the room grew black before Narcissa's eyes. Then her heart began to beat heavily again. She smiled at Dr. McLoughlin.

"Is this your news?" she asked, indicating the note in her hand.

"Madam, I do not read other people's mail!" thundered Dr. McLoughlin. "My news was received from the Indian. Dr. Whitman left Westport on May 22nd with a caravan of a thousand souls and two hundred canvas-covered wagons. They are on their way to Oregon under his leadership. Did you, by any chance, know of this?" demanded the Scotchman.

Narcissa shook her head. "I did not know whether he was alive or dead, where he was or what he was doing. I could only pray."

"Then you'd better pray some more," said McLoughlin bruskly. "Madam Whitman, Sir George Simpson left here a year ago, secure, he thought, in the knowledge that he had clinched this territory for Great Britain. He knew that President Tyler could negotiate the sort of a treaty Simpson wanted. He knew that your missions were doomed. So away he went. But he is a foresighted man and he sought to cover every contingency. He left orders with me that, for at least two years after he left, immigration was to be *kept out of here!*"

He paused and stared at Narcissa from beneath his shaggy white brows. Narcissa returned the stare and every force in her nature rose to do battle for Marcus, joyful that, at last, after the weary years of apprehension, the moment for action had come.

"What are you going to do first, Doctor?" asked Narcissa, very gently.

"First, I'm going to tell you a little about myself. Namely, that if Dr. Whitman brings a thousand folk in here, Oregon, to at least the 49th parallel, will go American,

and I, Madam Whitman, will be held to blame for it by my Company and by my Sovereign. I have been overfriendly to Americans, particularly to missionaries, and Sir George has seen to it that, in London, I'm the guilty party."

He spoke with unbelievable bitterness. Narcissa, watching him, felt a great wave of sympathy.

"I wish it might not have hurt you!" she exclaimed.

"The hurt has not been done, as yet," said McLoughlin grimly. "I'm merely telling you this to show you that I'm hard-driven, not only by my loyalty to my country, but by a desire to save my own skin. . . . You'll have realized, long since, my dear Madam Whitman, that this is no game for softies. England and America both are acting with no bowels of compassion. . . . Your husband's caravan will proceed with no undue accidents, it is probable, as far as Fort Hall. There, every possible inducement will be offered to the people to get them to turn south into California. If they will not, then they will proceed along the Snake River canyons until, at a favorable spot, Madam Whitman, a massacre by the Indians will take place. A massacre that will leave not so much as a babe to be carried across the Blue Mountains into Oregon."

Breathing heavily, the sweat standing on his forehead, the Chief Factor made his slow pronouncement.

"No!" breathed Narcissa, her eyes black with horror. "No! No! No! You will never permit that, Dr. McLoughlin!"

"It is not mine to permit," replied the doctor huskily. "Unless Dr. Whitman takes his hosts south, I cannot save him or them. That massacre plan has been gathering headway ever since Umtippe first turned against you at Waiilat-pu. He has put in nearly five years working among the Nez Percés, the Snakes and the Utes. At his signal, the word will be given."

"When did you learn this?" gasped Narcissa.

"Yesterday noon. Madam McLoughlin learned it from one of the Cayuse women you've been kind to."

"I must start for Fort Hall and head Marcus off." Narcissa staggered wildly to her feet.

"Ten days is the best any one, even an Indian can do, between here and Fort Hall. I have sent runners, several of them. But, Madam Whitman, your hope is Umtippe."

"Umtippe!" cried Narcissa, tragically. "He hates me! But Père Demers!" with sudden thought, "he can handle Umtippe!"

"Have him in!" cried the doctor.

Narcissa rushed out of the room and called to Henry Spalding who was loitering before the door of the store opposite. "Send Père Demers here, please, at once!"

Shortly the priest hurried across the stockade enclosure and followed Narcissa into the Chief Factor's room. McLoughlin repeated his statement of facts. Père Demers stood by the window, head bowed, arms folded on his chest. When the Chief Factor was through the priest smiled, sardonically.

"Some one has been telling you his bad dream, Doctor. Old Umtippe, I don't believe, could effect such an organization."

Dr. McLoughlin pounded on the split log floor with his cane. "I tell you, Père, it is so!" he roared. "Don't waste my time, doubting. You must call Umtippe off! This goes too far!"

"What may you mean by that, if you please?" asked Père Demers.

"I mean that Simpson may do his own dirty work. I'm through. 'Tis one thing to plan to frighten an immigrant train and deflect it southward. 'Tis another thing to actually permit these hellish redskin clans to gather."

"You malign Sir George Simpson, Dr. McLoughlin, and

you insult me and my cloth!" The priest was standing erect now, his eyes flashing angrily.

Narcissa, utterly baffled, watched the two. She was in an agony of apprehension.

"Perhaps I go too far in suggesting that you and Sir George know of the proposed massacre," said McLoughlin grudgingly. "But, I do know that you have done all that you could, Père Demers, to turn the Indians against the Protestant missionaries."

"Have I done more than the Protestants have done to turn the Indians against the priests?" demanded Père Demers.

"Yes!" exclaimed Narcissa. "You have done more because you have been able to influence the Indians and we have not! Père Demers, I don't for a moment think you capable of taking a hand in this terrible plan, nor do I believe Sir George Simpson—"

Dr. McLoughlin interrupted. "Didn't I admit that myself? But what both of them have done is to play with the forces of hell, and now these forces have got out of hand. You will get hold of Umtippe, at once, Père Demers!"

"Certainly," replied the priest. "I'll start immediately for Waii-lat-pu."

"He should be here shortly," said McLoughlin. "I sent for him last night. I could have had you bring him in, only the squaw did not divulge his name till after you'd gone. Pray be seated, madam," to Narcissa, who was walking the floor. "You make me lose my courage." Then, as Narcissa obeyed, he added to Père Demers, "Open the door that we may watch the trail for Umtippe. Have them open the stockade gates, too."

But the stockade gates already were swinging open to admit a solitary rider. It was Umtippe, jogging in serenely on a pinto pony. He was riding half naked, his hideously

wrinkled old body daubed with red and black paint. He wore the white horse's tail, as usual, and a long string of fetishes, human fingers and ears. Père Demers stepped to the door and called to the old chief. Umtippe dismounted in a leisurely manner, leaving his horse to a lounging Indian boy, and strolled into the Chief Factor's room.

Dr. McLoughlin pointed to a chair and said in Cayuse, "Rest, Chief Umtippe. Are your people well?"

"All are well," replied Umtippe.

"I am told, Umtippe,"—the Chief Factor leaned forward, chin on hands clasped over his cane—"I am told that you are, indeed, a great chief. That you have sworn brotherhood with your enemies, the Snakes and the Utes. Only a very great chief could have done that!"

Umtippe smiled, but said nothing.

"Hearing of your great power, I have a favor to ask of you, for which I will pay. The Snakes and the Utes are about to make war on a long line of Bostons who are coming this way. The Kitchie Okema and I do not wish this to happen. If you will stop it I will make you the richest Indian chief among all chiefs."

"Who says they will war on the Bostons?" asked Umtippe.

"I say it! I, the White Headed Eagle."

"Then you are a fool!" grunted the Cayuse.

Before Dr. McLoughlin could reply, Père Demers spoke. "Send out runners now, Umtippe. Call in the war chief of the Snakes and the Utes and the Nez Percés. Let us have council together."

Umtippe scowled. "What business have you two to interfere with my business?" he demanded. "Shall a great chief take orders?"

Suddenly Père Demers brought out his rosary. "When I reach the eighth bead," he said, "I shall begin to pray your soul into hell."

"I'll send for the war chiefs," said Umtippe, sullenly.

"I shall go with your messenger to bring the Ute chief," said the priest. "Factor McKinlay will go with your messenger to bring the Snake. The Nez Percés chief we have less anxiety about."

"And you, Umtippe, shall be my guest until their return," added Dr. McLoughlin. "You shall have all you wish to eat, but if, at the end of the second sunset, after to-day's sunset, the chiefs have not arrived and if plans for the war on the Bostons have not stopped, you, my greatest of great chiefs, shall be stood up against the stockade wall and shot—by me!" He turned to Narcissa. "Have in McKinlay, but tell him first what has happened."

On trembling legs, Narcissa hastened to obey. Archibald McKinlay listened to her hurried explanations, then, white to the lips, followed her into McLoughlin's room. A short time after, Père Demers and Archibald McKinlay galloped out of the gates in the company of a Snake and a Ute Indian runner. Umtippe, accompanied by two of Dr. McLoughlin's voyageurs, crossed the stockade to one of the clerk's houses which was not in use.

How she got through the succeeding two days, Narcissa never knew. She sent Henry Spalding back to Waii-lat-pu. Madam McLoughlin was ill and Narcissa sat with her for a part of both days. The rest of the time she talked with Dr. McLoughlin. By mutual consent, they avoided discussion of Oregon. The doctor, between gout twinges, told Narcissa much about his children and made a long story of the death of his son at the northern post. Narcissa talked to the doctor about her music and her early dreams connected with it. She even confided in him about her earlier engagement and her desire to live in Paris. But it was mere whistling to keep up their courage. And, on the last afternoon they were silent, Narcissa walking the floor and Dr. McLoughlin reading Scott's "Napoleon" upside down.

The Nez Percé chief arrived at noon. Archibald McKinlay came next, accompanied by the Ute runner and the Ute war chief in full feathered headdress, an eagle's wing strapped to his wrist. Père Demers followed, almost immediately, with the Snake chief, who wore buffalo horns on his head, elaborately decorated with eagle's feathers. Neither chief had been willing to come alone. At least a hundred braves of both tribes went into camp outside the fort as the chiefs entered.

Narcissa, being a woman, was requested at once by the Snake chief to leave the council room. Neither she nor McLoughlin dared to argue about the matter, and Narcissa withdrew, to pace up and down the adobe yard while the debate within the room proceeded.

It was dusk when the door opened and Archibald McKinlay came out.

"We can handle the others, but not Umtippe," he said. "The doctor wants you."

Narcissa entered the candle-lighted room.

"Madam Whitman," said the Chief Factor in English, "Umtippe will not make us the desired promise. See if you can make an appeal to his memory of the little White Cayuse. What's that song?"

Narcissa twisted her hands together, offered an unspoken prayer and opened her lips to sing. But only a broken note came forth. She could not sing. She knew as she stared at the Cayuse chief that her singing would fall on unmoved ears. A devil had roused in him that the little White Cayuse herself could not have downed. Narcissa drew a deep breath and gambled her all in one throw of the dice.

"Umtippe," she said in Cayuse, "if you will promise that Dr. Whitman and all his caravan shall not be molested by the Indians, I will agree that we will give back Waii-lat-pu to you."

Umtippe leaned forward, his deep eyes expressionless black holes in the shadowy light.

"And will you return it as it stands with all that you have put upon it, you and the doctor?" he asked.

"I will return it with all, save the body of the little White Cayuse. That I shall have removed and buried wherever I shall at last find an abiding place."

"No!" thundered Umtippe. "She belongs to me and my tribe, the gift of the Great Spirit."

A passion of resentment that none save a mother could have understood swept over Narcissa, and for a moment clouded in her mind the great issue for which she had offered her sacrifice. She rose from her place beside Dr. McLoughlin, thrusting a long, trembling hand toward the scowling Cayuse.

"You can demand that of me! You, Umtippe, when you, better than any man here, know what the loss of my little child has cost me! You can be so low, so bad of heart—"

Umtippe interrupted her with a roar. "Don't talk any more! Leave with us the little White Cayuse or I shall refuse all."

Narcissa sank back in her chair and, for a moment, hid her eyes with her shaking fingers. Then she moistened her lips, lifted her chin and looked at the chief with a hauteur that exceeded his own.

"All that we brought to Waii-lat-pu, including the body of the little White Cayuse shall remain with you."

"When will you go?" demanded Umtippe.

"One week after Dr. Whitman and his caravan reach the mission," replied Narcissa.

"You swear before the White Headed Eagle?"

"I will swear if you will swear," agreed Narcissa.

"I swear by the Great Spirit that the Indians shall not harm the caravan," said Umtippe at once.

"I swear,"—Narcissa's voice was very low,—"so help me

God, that if Umtippe keeps his word I will give Waii-lat-pu back to him."

There was silence in the room after this, until Dr. McLoughlin said, huskily:

"Will you order a couple of steers to be given for a feast, to-night, Archie?"

"Aa-a-ah!" breathed the chiefs pleasantly, and the council was ended.

"Now I know the old devil will keep his word," said McLoughlin when he and Narcissa were left alone, staring at each other across the candle.

"But what am I to say to Marcus?" Narcissa wrung her hand: "Every grain of sand at Waii-lat-pu is dear to him! What am I to say to the American Board?"

"You say nothing of your own grief at leaving the mission," said McLoughlin. "You did the one thing that could avert the disaster. Be content with that, as your husband may well be. And now, madam, I have my own request to make."

"And what is that?" asked Narcissa, wearily.

"You will admit, will you not," eyeing her closely, "that I did all that lay within my power, although it was against my own cause to protect your husband and his followers?"

"You did, indeed, to my undying gratitude!" exclaimed Narcissa.

"Madam Whitman, if that immigrant train, with its wagons and its thousand souls reaches Oregon, I am a ruined man. I am fifty-nine years of age. All that was best in me for twenty odd years I have given to saving this territory, to ruling the whites and the redskins for what I thought was their greatest good. It's for you to say whether or not I've been a wise ruler. I ask you now, I beg of you, to hasten immediately to meet your husband and deflect him before he reaches the Grande Ronde, into California. I ask this as a personal favor, as a reward, if

you please, as a return for saving your husband's life and the lives of a thousand other of your compatriots."

Narcissa gave a sigh that was almost a sob.

"You have signed your failure with the Cayuse," the doctor went on. "Personally, you have no love for this wilderness. Personally it can make no difference to you whether America rules north of the Columbia or not. But it means ruin or success for me."

Anger and compassion together held Narcissa quiet for a space. Then she said, gently: "But what makes you think that I could accomplish such a thing? Doctor, I couldn't deflect Marcus one mile from the course he has chosen."

Dr. McLoughlin brought his cane down heavily on the floor. "But you could!" he shouted. "You have us all beaten as a diplomatist and you know it! It would be impossible for any one but you. But you can do what you will with Marcus Whitman or Umtippe or George Simpson —if you desire to do it sufficiently." He paused, gazing at Narcissa with an expression so pleading, so eager and so sad, that her heart died within her.

"Oh, Doctor, Doctor!" she groaned, "do not ask it of me. Ask me to do anything else on earth and I will not hesitate, for I owe you my very life in gratitude for what you've done. But that, I cannot do."

"Cannot?" exclaimed McLoughlin.

"Will not!" replied Narcissa, sadly.

Then again silence. And it was as if England and America looked at each other across a sea of mutual resentment, admiration, longing, understanding and despair.

With infinite difficulty, Dr. McLoughlin pulled himself to his feet and, leaning heavily on his cane, he executed a low bow.

"Then I have the honor, Madam Whitman, to wish you a very good evening."

Narcissa swept him a courtesy, then stood staring at him. "Doctor, if ever I or mine can do aught, but this one thing, for you or yours, command us. Good night, sir!" and she left him standing alone by the solitary candle.

Narcissa saw no one that night, and she left for Waii-lat-pu the next morning before any one was up, save Charley Compo, whom Henry Spalding had sent in to bring her back to the mission. Charley brought her two items of bad news. Asahel Munger had died the previous day. And in the night following Narcissa's departure, Umtippe had burned the grist mill.

"How the old villain must regret that, now!" thought Narcissa with a sigh.

They held the funeral for Asahel as soon as Narcissa reached home. Poor Mrs. Munger, utterly forlorn except for her baby daughter Mary, announced that she would now never leave Narcissa. Henry Spalding, half delirious with joy over Marcus' news and entirely ignorant of Narcissa's bargain with Umtippe, left for Lap-wai the morning after the funeral, and Narcissa began at once to make preparations for the reception of the great train of folk that must pass by Waii-lat-pu. Food she knew would be their prime necessity. The vegetable and grain harvest had been enormous that year and Narcissa had no fears of being unable to supply all reasonable needs.

She had William Geiger set up the stone hand-mill that Marcus had used before the arrival of the larger grist mill from the Sandwich Islands. He ground every day until the store room was overflowing with bins of flour. Potatoes, turnips, beets and onions were measured and piled in huge quantities where it would be easy to distribute them to the hungry horde.

Umtippe, in the meantime, had come back from Fort Walla Walla to the Indian village, which was being filled rapidly by returning hunters. To Narcissa's surprise he

did not harass her as usual, but kept close to his lodge, as though content that the white woman he hated should have one last fling.

On the first day of October, Narcissa posted an Indian on the hilltop, with instructions to fire three shots from the doctor's old musket whenever the vanguard of the caravan should appear. But not until early on the afternoon of the sixth did the signal sound. Instantly, Narcissa, followed by the Geigers and Mrs. Munger, rushed up the hillside.

Far to the east, where the trail over the plains began to rise into the foothills of the Blue Mountains, a line of horsemen had appeared and, as Narcissa reached the crest and shading her eyes with her hand peered over the familiar trail, the white top of a wagon appeared from beneath the first growth of timber on the purple mountain slope. In a moment another white top followed this, then another, and still another.

"Four," counted William Geiger, "five—six—seven—eight—"

"Hush!" exclaimed Narcissa. "I feel more like singing Doxology, than like counting!"

So they stood in reverent silence while, one after another, the white tops glided down into the valley. Indians were joining them now, and the hillside was filled with comments and conjectures.

After a time a horseman was seen to ride ahead of the long line of the caravan and move westward, at a gallop.

"That's the doctor!" said Mrs. Munger softly. "He aims to be here ahead of the others. You must go down to greet him alone, Mrs. Whitman."

"It will be at least an hour before he can reach here," replied Narcissa, unsteadily. "Still, I think I will go. There are some little things I wish to finish before he gets here."

The little things—well, perhaps that was the correct

phrase for them—! Narcissa hurried into the deserted house and changed her calico dress to the gray silk, still ample in the skirt after the tragic breadths had been cut from it three years before. She did her hair more loosely round her face and stared long at herself in the tiny mirror, and sighed over her roughened hands. Then she went out and stood motionless in the doorway that gave on the east trail.

She was motionless until, in the sunset glow, Marcus jumped from his horse, tossed his hat to the ground and, with a great cry of "Narcissa!" gathered her to his heart.

Then she flung her arms about his neck and lifted her lips to his. They clung to each other for a breathless moment. At last Marcus raised his head.

"Ah, this is what I lived for! You standing in the gray silk in the door of Waii-lat-pu. Tell me, are you glad I've come?"

"Glad! Marcus! Marcus!" Narcissa lifted her eyes to his.

At what he saw there Marcus' eyes burned, but he burst forth as if he would tell truth at whatever cost.

"But I did not do what you planned, Narcissa!"

"I can't help that!" exclaimed Narcissa. "Whatever you've done or have not done, you're Marcus—oh, my dear, my dear! How shall I show you what I've grown to feel for you!"

Marcus' face, under its tan, turned very white. He drew Narcissa out from the shadow of the door and with a big, gentle hand turned her face into the afterglow. A moment of scrutiny, then he said, brokenly:

"I don't deserve it, my darling! I don't deserve it! But put into words the wonderful thing your eyes are saying."

Narcissa's low voice had never before held overtones of such beauty. "I love you, Marcus," she said. "I love you."

"Now, indeed, I am blessed above all men," murmured

the doctor, and he kissed her as if never before had he laid his lips to hers.

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Mr. and Mrs. Geiger held back the Indians as long as it was possible, but even with their best efforts, Marcus and Narcissa did not have a quarter of an hour alone before the whole crew burst upon them. Narcissa, even had she wished to do so, would have had no opportunity to tell Marcus of the fate of Waii-lat-pu then, for by the time he had freed himself from his Indian friends the first of the immigrants were riding up to the gates. They were in great straits for food, and the task of apportioning flour and vegetables was begun at once.

The work was carried on systematically. Barrels of flour were opened in the yard and from these each immigrant was given his portion by William Geiger, while Marcus, with Charley Compo, handled the vegetables. The job was well under way and the yard thronged with immigrants and gaping Indians, when Umtippe shouldered his way into the glare of the fire by which the distributing was being done. His face was distorted with rage.

"What right have you to give away my food?" he shouted, violently striking a cup of milk from Narcissa's hand.

Every one within earshot became silent.

"You are a liar! You are a thief!" As he spoke Umtippe's lips were flecked with foam, and before Narcissa could move or speak the old Cayuse struck her violently across the face.

Instantly Marcus, rushing forward, knocked him down. Umtippe scrambled to his feet and flung his tomahawk at Narcissa's head. It cut across her braids and buried itself in Charley Compo's skull. Compo pitched, head foremost, into the half empty potato barrel. There rose a diabolical howl from an Indian in the crowd and Charley Compo's father rushed forward, tomahawk raised. Marcus seized

his hand just in time to prevent his scattering Umtippe's brains as Umtippe had scattered the *te-wat's*.

"Let him go, doctor!" shouted William Geiger. "The old villain has got to be killed by some one." He seized Umtippe by the arms.

Umtippe thrust Geiger aside. "Let him go," he snarled at Marcus in Cayuse. "I will not owe my life to you."

He jerked a small ax from his belt and as he made a rush at Compo's father, Geiger suddenly threw himself against Marcus, breaking the doctor's hold on the struggling man.

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A moment later, with the ax of Compo's father in his skull, old Umtippe lay dead beside the crackling fire.

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Narcissa's cheek was bruised and one of her braids cut, but she was unhurt otherwise. She was, however, terribly shaken and after the wailing Indians had removed the bodies of the two Indians, Marcus left the further distribution of food supplies to the Geigers and took Narcissa into the house.

Sitting beside her on the couch, he chafed her hands and sought to calm her, as if she had been a child.

"You don't know all it means!" cried Narcissa, excitedly. "It's not only that he's been a nightmare to me, for seven years! Not only that! That's the least of it. You don't know!"

"Then tell me what I don't know, dearest!" said Marcus.

Narcissa rose and, pacing up and down the room, told of her last encounter with Dr. McLoughlin and of her bargain with Umtippe.

"Not that I think," she ended, "that his death removes our obligation to keep the bargain. But Charley Compo's father will be Umtippe's successor. Perhaps—"

But Marcus crossed over to Narcissa and took her in his

arms. "So it was you, after all, who brought the caravan safely through!" he exclaimed, brokenly. "Darling Narcissa, what can I say to you? How can I thank you?"

"How can there be thanks between you and me?" Narcissa spoke with a little sob. "There is that between you and me, so much bigger than gratitude—after all these years together—all that we have done and suffered and sought—" She buried her bruised face against Marcus' heart.

Under the cottonwoods, the immigrants were quieting down for the night. From the Indian village rose the wail of squaws; and far, from the plains, came the howl of circling wolves. Marcus, with a tender great hand, lifted up the flushed, beautiful face and gently touched the bruised cheek with his lips.

"Dear, dear Narcissa!" he whispered, and gathered her closer still.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PROMISED LAND

IF the threatened loss of the mission staggered Marcus, he did not allow Narcissa to perceive it, that night. He was deeply anxious over the movements of the caravan, under Jesse Applegate's political leadership, and he put off discussing with Narcissa their own problematical movements by telling her of Applegate's plans and threats. He admitted to her that his only hope of maintaining peace in Oregon was in his reliance on Dr. McLoughlin's diplomacy.

It was long after midnight before they ceased this discussion of Applegate's plans and went to sleep.

The immigrant column was up and on its way by daylight. Marcus, with a fresh horse, could allow the column a start of a day and easily overtake it, the following morning. This he planned to do, in order to take what steps he might, in the matter of Narcissa's bargain with Umtippe. When the last of the herds had followed in after the covered wagons, Marcus turned to the Cayuse village.

Already a group of squaws was erecting the burial scaffolds, on the plains beyond the village. Marcus passed by these grim workers without comment, and entered the lodge of the new chief, Compo's father.

"We shall miss our brother," said Marcus, sitting down beside the fire.

"You were his friend. He was your friend," responded the Cayuse heavily.

The doctor nodded. "He was a Christian, too. You will let me say the burial service for him?"

"Yes!" groaned the chief, "but all your prayers to your

God will not bring him back. I saw that, with the little White Cayuse."

"God needs him, or he would not have taken him," declared Marcus.

The chief did not contradict this, and the two sat in silent contemplation of the fire until Marcus rose to go, asking as he did so, "Did you know of Mrs. Whitman's bargain with Umtippe?"

"Yes," grunted the chief.

"We were to leave, one week after my return," said Marcus. "If you insist, we shall do so. But I would like to lead these Bostons to the Willamette before I begin to make a new mission. Will you give us two months longer?"

The new chief looked up at Marcus, curiously, and Marcus returned the look. For all that he and Narcissa had known Charley Compo so intimately, the interpreter's father was almost entirely unknown to them. That he was the greatest hunter in the tribe and thus seldom in the village, and that he was the richest man in the tribe, next to Umtippe, formed about the sum total of their knowledge of him. He never had made trouble for the Whitmans. On the other hand, he never had shown them friendliness. What his attitude would be toward the program of the man who had murdered his son, Marcus could not guess and dared not ask. He watched the fierce, brooding face and waited.

"I'll give you two moons," said the chief finally. "But you must not allow any of the Bostons to take land near here."

"They don't wish to stop here," retorted Marcus. "When is your son's funeral to take place?"

"At noon," answered the chief. "No other white but you must come."

"Very well," replied Marcus, meekly, and he hurried out to tell Narcissa of their reprieve.

At noon, under a cloudless sky and with a high, clean wind sweeping down from the Blue Mountains, Marcus said the last prayers over the blanket-wrapped body of his best friend among the Cayuse. Then he helped to hoist the tragic bundle to the scaffolding of cottonwood sticks, where it was left to the not ungentle ministrations of the wind and sun. An hour later, with great pomp of chant and beating drums, old Umtippe was hoisted to his last resting place. It was at a point that he himself had chosen. From his airy platform, his dead eyes never would lose sight of the grave of the little White Cayuse. And from her bedroom window, whenever she looked toward her baby's grave, Narcissa must see, silhouetted against the exquisite shadow of Mount Hood, the death scaffold of the aborigine whose soul, after all, she had been unable to save.

Marcus left that night to overtake the caravan.

He had been gone a week, when Miles and Sarah appeared at the mission gates, followed by a small retinue of Indians and voyageurs. It had been a particularly lonely day for Narcissa. For hours, sleet had driven across the plains, stilling, for the first time in many days, the cries of wild geese in southward flight. The mission never had seemed more isolated, and Narcissa greeted the two young travelers with a cry of joy.

"What a time of year to be gadding about!" she added, as she settled them before the fire with steaming cups of tea.

"We're wintering at Fort Vancouver," said Sarah, sipping gratefully at her tea.

Narcissa looked at her keenly. Already girlishness had departed from Sarah's face. She looked a little harassed, as if her responsibilities weighed upon her.

"Fort Vancouver is not eastward, but westward!" Narcissa's eyes twinkled.

"We've just come from The Dalles," said Miles, abruptly. "Dr. Whitman's immigrants are having the very devil of a

time getting through there. The big rains are playing havoc with them. They're short of food and their stock is in bad shape."

Narcissa gave an exclamation of pity. "Oh, what will the poor things do!"

"Eat the food Dr. McLoughlin is sending them, unless that fire-eater of an Applegate is able to prevent it," retorted Miles.

"I don't see how Applegate can do that!" protested Narcissa.

Miles shrugged his shoulders. He too was looking harassed and over-burdened.

"That's a fine thing for Dr. McLoughlin to do," Narcissa went on.

"It's better politics than any one else in the Company has the brains to play!" declared Miles. "It's the one way to prevent war, here in Oregon—to buy the gratitude of these settlers."

"Does Dr. McLoughlin feel as helpless as that?" asked Narcissa, skeptically.

"You know he must feel so!" answered Miles. "This caravan of Dr. Whitman brings the American population up so that it outnumbers the British, three to one. Everybody laughed at him when he sent back to London, a year ago, asking for protection. They'll sing another tune now!"

Narcissa leaned forward, her blue eyes eager in the fire glow. "Then Oregon is American!" she exclaimed.

"Not yet!" replied Miles. "The day Sarah and I left Fort Vancouver, Her Majesty's ship, 'Modeste,' cast anchor before the fort. It's a man-of-war, carrying twenty guns and five hundred men. On board her is Lieutenant Peel, son of Sir Robert Peel, the British prime minister. He is furious over what he calls the Chief Factor's 'friendliness' to the Yankees. He can't see that McLoughlin's way is the only way to prevent massacre."

"Massacre!" cried Narcissa.

"Yes, massacre, Mrs. Whitman! If the Americans start trouble, the Indians are going to turn against the Bostons, and Dr. McLoughlin will be powerless to hold them back. Though he's doing what he can."

"It's at this point that I contribute my mite!" said Sarah. "I'm calling a pow-wow of the big chiefs."

"As the last of her mother's line," explained Miles, "Sarah has much influence, even though she's a woman."

Sarah smiled. "If only that old villain of an Umtippe had lived long enough for me to bully him into line!"

Narcissa's lips tightened. "He still is bullying us!" she exclaimed and she told in as few words as possible of her bargain.

When she had finished, Sarah cried, indignantly:

"They shall never drive you from Waii-lat-pu, Madam Whitman! I can promise you that!"

For the first time Narcissa felt real hope. "Sarah! Do you think you can help?"

"I know I can," replied Sarah. Then she added, with a look in her gray eyes that was half humorous, half sad, "Though if it would send you back to civilization, where you belong, I'd be tempted to let the bargain go through!"

Narcissa shook her head. "The doctor's heart-roots are in the soil of Waii-lat-pu. And I long since recognized that my life work is here and nowhere else."

"I know!" Sarah suddenly rose to cross the room and kiss Narcissa. "What do I not owe to you, my more than mother!"

"You owe me to her, that's certain," announced Miles, with a ridiculous smirk.

Narcissa laughed.

"Nevertheless," Sarah nodded vigorously, as she joined in the laughter, "here's the chance for me to make first payment on my debt and I shall make it, to-morrow."

"And my way of showing my gratitude, Mrs. Whitman," said Miles, soberly, "must be to ask you to undertake another heavy task. The reason Sarah and I came here, first, was because I want to ask you to hurry down to The Dalles and see what you can do with Jesse Applegate. Dr. Whitman tells me you had no conversation with him while he was here."

Narcissa shook her head. "There was no opportunity. Anyhow, I don't see what I can do."

"You can try to prevent Applegate's starting war between England and America!" replied Miles.

Narcissa threw up her hands. "But, Miles, how can I do anything?"

"I don't know," replied Miles. "But you always do manage people, and I'm surprised that Dr. Whitman didn't call on you to help him."

"He wants to finish this work himself. It's his own!" explained Narcissa. "I cannot interfere."

"You don't see the seriousness of this!" cried Miles, impatiently.

"I do, only too clearly," returned Narcissa, sadly, touched by Miles' confidence in her ability, but nevertheless unpersuaded that she could handle Jesse Applegate. "I know that the sight of that man-of-war must be maddening to Americans, even to Marcus. And if Marcus loses his head—"

"Exactly!" exclaimed Miles. "Go down to The Dalles, dear Mrs. Whitman, and if you do nothing else, help Dr. Whitman to keep his head!"

Narcissa hesitated and Miles saw her hesitation. "McKinlay is sending a boat express to Fort Vancouver, tomorrow night," he said. "You can travel swiftly and in comfort."

"I could, perhaps, help Marcus to keep steady," admitted Narcissa. "Perhaps I'd better go."

"And I'll see the Cayuse chief, to-night," added Sarah. "I'll see him, now, so that that worry may be off your mind."

She rose, as she spoke, and was off into the storm.

Miles turned to Narcissa to say, in a voice husky with emotion, "Mrs. Whitman, God alone knows all that I owe to you! It would have been more than enough if you'd only been my conscience, as you were all these first years in Oregon. But you've given me so much more than that. For you gave me Sarah! I don't think even you realize what a person she is, Mrs. Whitman. She's big, that's all. Up there among the Iroquois, she's already their ruler. And yet, she's not at all an Indian. She's white to her core. And you know, she understands me and all my weaknesses as no one else does, yet she loves me. You and Sir George Simpson and Sarah—well, if I don't do something first-rate, in the world, I ought to be shot!"

"You are doing something first-rate, right now, dear Miles!" Narcissa laid a caressing hand on the young man's head for a moment, before going in search of Geiger, to whom she wished to announce her prospective trip.

Sarah was gone until supper time. Miles was prowling uneasily about the house, threatening, every moment or so, to go after her, when she burst into the dining-room, threw her wet cloak on a chair and gave Miles a kiss and Narcissa a hug.

"'Tis done! We are bosom friends, the new chief and I! We decided that, to circumvent old Umtippe's ghost, it was even worth while to keep the Whitmans at Waii-lat-pu! Also we are going to work together to ally the Cayuse with the Iroquois."

Narcissa stood by the table, white of face. "Then I can give Waii-lat-pu back to Marcus! Oh, thank God! Thank God!" and suddenly, fearful of showing too much emotion, she hurried into her bedroom.

As the door closed behind her, Sarah sank, wearily, into

a chair. Miles knelt beside her and drew her head against his shoulder. "Was it very hard, my darling?"

Sarah raised her head to look into her young husband's eyes. "Miles," she said in a low voice, "it was almost impossible! The hatred these Cayuse have for whites in general and the Whitmans in particular is horrible. I used his jealousy of Umtippe and his greed for power in the new alliance, to curb his designs on the mission. But nothing can touch his vicious hatred."

"Are they safe, now?" asked Miles, anxiously.

"For the time being. For a year or so! Then I shall come back and do it over again. They are in my care, these two dear people."

"And in mine," agreed Miles. "Rest now, dearest, until supper is ready."

Sarah gave a great sigh of comfort, and dropped her head, once more, on Miles' shoulder.

. . . . . .

Four days later, Narcissa disembarked at the immigrant camp, which by now was set a few miles west of The Dalles. It was shortly after sunset when she left the boat, and the western sky was brilliant, following a day of gusty rain. The many wagons were bedraggled and dripping, but camp fires were appearing in every direction, along the rock-strewn shore, giving, somehow, the sense of home to every canvas top that turned from gray to gold in their glow.

Narcissa pulled her beaver cloak close about her and asked a boy to direct her to Dr. Whitman. He jerked an uninterested thumb toward a lodge, at some distance from the shore, and Narcissa made her way thither.

It was a large lodge, of buffalo hide. A bright fire burned before its entrance. Within, Narcissa perceived that three men were seated. So engrossed were they with one another, however, that Narcissa was actually in the tent en-

trance before she was observed. Then the three jumped to their feet.

"Narcissa!" cried Marcus. "What is wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong at Waii-lat-pu. I bring you good news from there, dear Marcus," Narcissa smiled at her husband, then turned to a man in tattered buckskin, a powerful, bearded man, who flashed white teeth as he returned her smile.

"Good evening, Mr. Applegate!"

"Good evening, Mrs. Whitman! I'll introduce Lieutenant Peel, of the ship, 'Modeste.'"

Narcissa held out her hand to the Englishman. He was a young man of fine height, with a smooth-shaven, aquiline face, and remarkably large, clear, gray eyes. He wore a red coat, with light blue trousers. Both fitted his slender figure without a wrinkle. On his sleeve were the anchor and star of a senior lieutenant.

He bowed gracefully over Narcissa's hand. "I hope, madam, that you have not been obliged to travel far in this inclement weather."

"Our mission station is a three days' journey from here," replied Narcissa. "But I'm well sheltered by my cloak." She glanced down at its ample folds and added, with a smile: "It's been a blessing to me for many years and I have the Hudson's Bay Company to thank for it. Sir George Simpson sent it to me before my baby came."

"Ah, yes! Sir George is a friend of my father," said the Lieutenant. "I have met him. I wish—" with a rueful smile, "that he were here now, instead of in India."

"I don't!" cried Marcus. "His iron grip would be all wrong. Here, Narcissa, this is a man's camp and we've no chairs. But you can make use of this log, can't you? We've finished our supper, but I'll have something—"

Narcissa interrupted. "Thank you, Marcus, I had my supper in the boat. I hope I'm not going to interrupt the

conference. If you wish, I'll go visit in one of the covered wagons."

"I'm glad you're here," said Marcus, abruptly. "See if you can make these two obstinate folks see reason. Applegate swears by all that's holy he's going to found a town on the north bank of the Columbia as close as he can crowd, I suppose, to Fort Vancouver. Lieutenant Peel says that if he or any other American encroaches on British property, the 'Modeste' will know how to protect it."

Applegate flushed and smiled, while young Peel laughed, though grimly, and said:

"It's not quite as *gauche* as that, Madam Whitman!"

"Still, the doctor has a way of getting at the heart of a situation!" said Narcissa, as she warmed her hands at the fire and looked from one man to the next.

All were seated now, on logs, before the fire, the two ragged and dirty frontiersmen contrasting violently with the immaculately uniformed officer. Peel looked at the beautiful, careworn woman, his interest quite unconcealed.

"What would you have us do, madam?" he asked, still smiling, "give Fort Vancouver to Mr. Applegate?"

"You'd save time and expense if you did!" declared Applegate, truculently.

"You are demanding war, sir!" exclaimed the Lieutenant.

"Why not!" retorted Applegate.

The Englishman shrugged his shoulders, and for a moment no one spoke.

Narcissa sat looking into the fire, while her mind went back, step by step, over the struggle for the possession of Oregon.

"It will be a ghastly thing," she said, at last, "if the winning of Oregon by either side is accomplished by a baptism of blood. I am against joining any territory whatever, at the cost of human lives. What Daniel Webster said to Dr. Whitman, as to his belief that Oregon was not worth war

was right. And yet even he did not dream of what war would mean here on the Columbia and the Willamette. Nor do you two gentlemen understand, who have not lived as housemates to these savages for seven years, as we have. It is their land which we are quarreling about, and they know it."

"They've never made use of the land," interrupted Marcus. "They can't expect to keep it."

"I agree with you," replied Narcissa. "But they'll never see it that way, of course." She turned to the Lieutenant. "May I ask, sir, did you come, armed with authority from your Government to precipitate war between America and Great Britain?"

"I am here to protect British citizens from overt acts on the part of American citizens," replied Peel.

"And that is all?" insisted Narcissa.

"That is all," replied the Lieutenant.

"Then you are the aggressive spirit, Mr. Applegate." She looked at the Missourian. "You are willing, nay, anxious, to start war between the two nations. For you must realize that fighting here will mean war in the east. The doctor tells me that already the American public is so inflamed over the attitude of England in Texas, that any pretext will be seized upon to declare war."

"I ask no one to do more than I'm doing myself." Applegate squared his shoulders, doggedly. "I'm willing to shoulder a gun and offer my own life, to save this territory."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Narcissa. "You are melodramatic where there's no need! Why should you thrust danger into a situation that is secure as it stands? Dr. Whitman's plan is sane and will work. Your caravan, added to the Americans already on the Willamette, can absolutely control the government of Oregon."

"If Mr. Applegate will agree to keep his hosts south of the Columbia, until our respective governments have made

their treaty, I will agree that the 'Modeste' shall withdraw from the Columbia," said Peel.

"Where will you go?" asked Applegate, suspiciously.

"To join my squadron. There are twelve British men-o'-war on the Pacific coast," replied the Lieutenant.

"There! What did I tell you!" shouted Applegate. "England's going to take this country while we sit debating. I refuse—"

He was interrupted by a woman's voice, without. "Jesse! Oh, Jesse! I'm all out of firewood!"

With an exclamation of annoyance, the Missourian dashed out of the lodge and Narcissa suddenly picked up her cloak and hurried after him. Two tall figures, one of them a woman's, were walking toward a near-by covered wagon. Narcissa came up to the camp fire, just as Applegate strode away toward the river, leaving the women alone by the fire.

"I'm Mrs. Whitman, Dr. Marcus Whitman's wife," said Narcissa, holding out her hand. "You are Mrs. Applegate, aren't you?"

"Yes!" The woman, thin, sunburned, anxious looking, took Narcissa's hand, with a frankly curious glance. "I saw you at the mission, back yonder. But I guess I looked like all the rest of the women, to you."

"Well, there was a great number of you!" replied Narcissa apologetically.

"And you were having plenty of troubles of your own! My, wasn't that Indian murder a terrible thing?"

"Indian murder is what I came to talk to you about," replied Narcissa.

"I believe you know all about it! Sit down, Mrs. Whitman. I brought that rocking chair through in spite of everything."

"Have you two or three neighbors you could ask over,

Mrs. Applegate, women who have influence with others? There's something I want to suggest to you all, just as an old timer to newcomers, you know!"

"Any number of ladies would be pleased to hear you," said Mrs. Applegate, thoughtfully. "That's fine, Jesse!" as her husband came up with an arm-load of wood. "You're excused, now."

"Coming back to finish that talk, Mrs. Whitman?" asked the Missourian.

"In a little while," replied Narcissa. "I don't think you really need me."

"Well, you'll do for a rubbing post for our ideas," answered Applegate, turning toward the lodge.

"The Ladies' Prayer Meeting is meeting to-night, over by Sister Owen's Conestoga. Might be a good chance for you to talk. Let's go over right now."

Narcissa, a few minutes later, stood facing a gathering of perhaps a hundred women, seated on rocks and logs, about the fire. She prayed for guidance and then plunged into one of the great efforts of her life. She proposed to beguile these women into refusing to settle anywhere but upon the Willamette. She wished to tell them of the imminence of Indian massacre and what Indian massacre in Oregon would mean. She talked for about half an hour, and during that time, she made every appeal that her imagination could muster, to the jaded, home-seeking hearts of her hearers. But mostly she played up the menace of war, contrasted with their opportunity for peaceful occupation of vast homesteads, south of the Columbia.

"You have heard the men discussing this ever since you left Missouri," she said, in closing. "But none of them knew what they were talking about, because none of them knew real conditions here. I know, for I've lived here seven long years. And I beg of you, for the sake of all you

hold dear in life, to refuse to follow Jesse Applegate in his mad venture against the Hudson's Bay Company. You have come through a more terrible journey than the Pilgrim mothers made, two hundred years ago. You are standing on the edge of the Promised Land, which in very truth flows with milk and honey, for your children and your children's children. Shall you, then, allow the men to deflect you and lead you into all the ghastly hazards of this war of aggression?"

"No, Sister Whitman, we shan't!" cried Mrs. Applegate. "I guess I speak for most of the women here when I say our ears had got so sick of hearing the men debate that we were willing to be led anywhere for the sake of making them keep quiet. But the men were mighty careful to keep any war talk from us."

"Well, if all the men's information," exclaimed a little old lady in a black sunbonnet, "is as bad as what they had about Dr. McLoughlin, I guess none of it's to be trusted. We've all eaten his bread for two days. There ain't any of my men folks going to lift a finger against that man's fort, I say that, flat!"

"The last of the wagons got around The Dalles and came into camp to-night," said Mrs. Applegate. "How many of you ladies will agree to get hitched up and in line to follow Dr. Whitman into the Willamette country at dawn to-morrow? As far as I'm concerned, I take this stand. I want Jesse and the boys to shoulder a gun for defense, whenever it's necessary. But for aggression, never!"

A quick clapping of hands followed this, then the old lady of the sunbonnet spoke again. "We'll all go with Dr. Whitman! Don't you worry a mite, Sister Whitman. All we wanted to have was a little common-sense truth told us. The men are so full of politics they forget religion and truth and the good of their own families. If you see that man, McLoughlin, give him our undying thanks."

"I will," replied Narcissa. "Thank you all for listening to me, and good-night to you."

She turned away, but not, for the moment, to return to the lodge. The moon had risen and she walked toward the river bank, whither, a moment before, she had seen Lieutenant Peel strolling. She found him gazing at the magnificent shadows of distant peaks, his face curiously wistful.

"You left us very suddenly, Madam Whitman!" he exclaimed, as she came up.

"I went away to find help," replied Narcissa, "and I found it. I've started an insurrection among the wives!" and smiling a little, she told him of the interrupted prayer meeting.

Young Peel, tall and elegant in the moonlight, listened intently. "You believe that they will be able to accomplish this?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Narcissa simply, "that part is as good as done."

"Then, when they reach the Willamette, I'll leave with the 'Modeste,'" said the Lieutenant. "I think this thing will have to be compromised, and I shall tell my father so. With twelve hundred Americans with the spirit of Applegate against our handful, compromise is our only choice. We must be satisfied with the forty-ninth parallel, as your Daniel Webster has proposed. I believe, Madam Whitman, if the hot-heads can be withheld from war until my ship can reach England, all will be well." He turned his steady gaze from Narcissa, to the rushing river and the sentinel peaks. "'Tis a glorious country. But we are a year too late!"

"Do you feel it necessary to start back for your ship, tonight?" asked Narcissa. "I'm sure the doctor can find a sleeping place for you, and I'd like to have you witness the exodus of the women, in the morning."

"Oh, I shall stay for that!" exclaimed Lieutenant Peel,

with a quiet laugh. "I'm a little skeptical about it, you know."

Narcissa laughed with him, but added: "You don't know American wives, Lieutenant! Especially pioneer wives, such as these are. There is fine steel in their resolution, and they are fully as intelligent as the men and quite as well educated. They came up through the district schools, side by side. That's very important in making you understand that the men fully recognize their wives' equality with themselves."

"I see!" said young Peel, courteously.

"Of course, you don't see at all!" exclaimed Narcissa, half laughingly and half ruefully. "But you will, to-morrow morning! Good night, Lieutenant."

The Lieutenant bowed over her hand and Narcissa turned to the lodge, where Marcus sat alone, awaiting her.

What was said, that night, in the Applegate Conestoga, or in two hundred other Conestogas, history does not reveal. But candles burned behind the canvas covers and voices rose in argument from beneath them, to an unprecedentedly late hour. One would give much to know what Mrs. Applegate said to her husband, although almost any wife or any husband, knowing the pioneer woman's theme could guess with approximate accuracy at most of the arguments used. But Mrs. Applegate did not keep a diary, and all that we may know is what Narcissa knew.

Long before dawn, the usual cry sounded from the watch, "Arise! Arise! Arise!" and the camp surged to life.

To Marcus and Narcissa and Lieutenant Peel, breakfasting on coffee and fish before the lodge, came Jesse Applegate, equipped for riding.

"Well!" he said, "you're smart, Mrs. Whitman, that's all I've got to say! The women in this outfit, thanks to you, are starting to-day for the Willamette, whether the men go or not!"

Narcissa laughed. "And the men are going on, to attack Fort Vancouver, I suppose!"

"No, we're going with our families," replied Jesse Applegate, "but with the distinct understanding that the 'Modeste' leaves the Columbia."

"It will," said young Peel.

"And more than that," continued Applegate, belligerently, "I want it distinctly understood that my main reason for changing my mind is not any woman's influence, but because of Dr. McLoughlin's attitude toward us. I believe he's been maligned, and maybe his Company's been maligned. I'm going to look him up, after I get my folks settled for the winter, and see if we can't compromise, say on parallel forty-nine."

"Right you are, Applegate!" exclaimed the Lieutenant. "Your decision is sane. No one will admit more quickly than McLoughlin that your caravan has won a bloodless victory for America."

The half sullen, half belligerent look died out of Applegate's honest eyes. He straightened his shoulders and held out his hand to the Englishman.

"Thank you, Lieutenant! And if you ever get back to this country, you make my house your headquarters. I'd admire to have you."

"I shall be most grateful to do so," replied Peel, rising to accept the proffered hand.

Marcus looked at Applegate in silence for a moment, then he said: "Jesse, the trail is clear as an avenue from here to the Willamette. You don't need me. Lead on, yourself. I like to think of you as finishing this trip as head of the expedition."

A broad smile showed Applegate's perfect teeth. "That's white of you, Doctor! Nothing I'd like better—Lord, there's my wife starting the ox-team!"

The Missourian whirled on his heel and rushed toward

his horse, shouting as he did, the rallying cry of the trail:

"Catch up! Catch up! You sluggards, catch up!"

Narcissa, Marcus and Lieutenant Peel stood before the lodge, watching the camp fall into line. The rising sun was struggling to pierce a fog, and all the world was orange mist, through which wagons and riders, straining oxen and muscle-sore horses, moved like creatures of a dream, past the audience of three:—wagon after wagon, with children peeping from under the hoods, or capering beside the rattling wheels, then horseback riders, boys and men bearing guns, then cattle, with starting ribs, and last of all, a flock of sheep, trotting patiently on bleeding hoofs.

The sun was sailing high, when the last sound of the bleating sheep died in the west. A breeze from the river was lifting the fog, and peaks and wooded crests showed forth.

The Lieutenant's gaze swept the deserted camp ground, with its fires still smouldering, and rested on the river edge, where sat a group of patient voyageurs beside a canoe. He raised his hat to Narcissa.

"I have seen the Israelites, coming out of the wilderness into the land of Canaan," he said, "and I must return and tell the skeptics in London of it."

Narcissa was standing with eyes still strained toward the west. But she responded to the Lieutenant's suggestion by repeating the immortal message to Joshua, "'Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all thy people, unto the land which I do give to them. . . . From the wilderness . . . and unto the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. . . . I will be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.'"

"Yes," said the young Englishman, soberly, "it must, indeed, seem to you that God has led you on."

He shook hands with Narcissa and Marcus, and went slowly down to his waiting canoe.

Narcissa and Marcus watched his boat fly into the far mists of the river, then, with hearts and minds too full for words, they began to make preparations for their return to Waii-lat-pu.

. . . . . .

Only eighty-two years ago, it was, that morning of golden mist on which the most important single migration the west has known, began that last short lap of its mighty journey. Only eighty-two years since that morning and only seventy-nine years since America and Great Britain signed the treaty which gave Oregon, up to the forty-ninth parallel, to the United States. And yet in that short four score of years memories of Narcissa and her heartaches, her griefs and her dreams, and of her and Marcus' inestimable gift to America have been dimmed by the uproar of the civilization which throngs the valleys wherein she made the ultimate sacrifice. And yet she experienced during her lifetime what is, perhaps, the greatest satisfaction vouchsafed to human beings. She was permitted to give all that lay within her to her country. Blessed was she among women.

THE END

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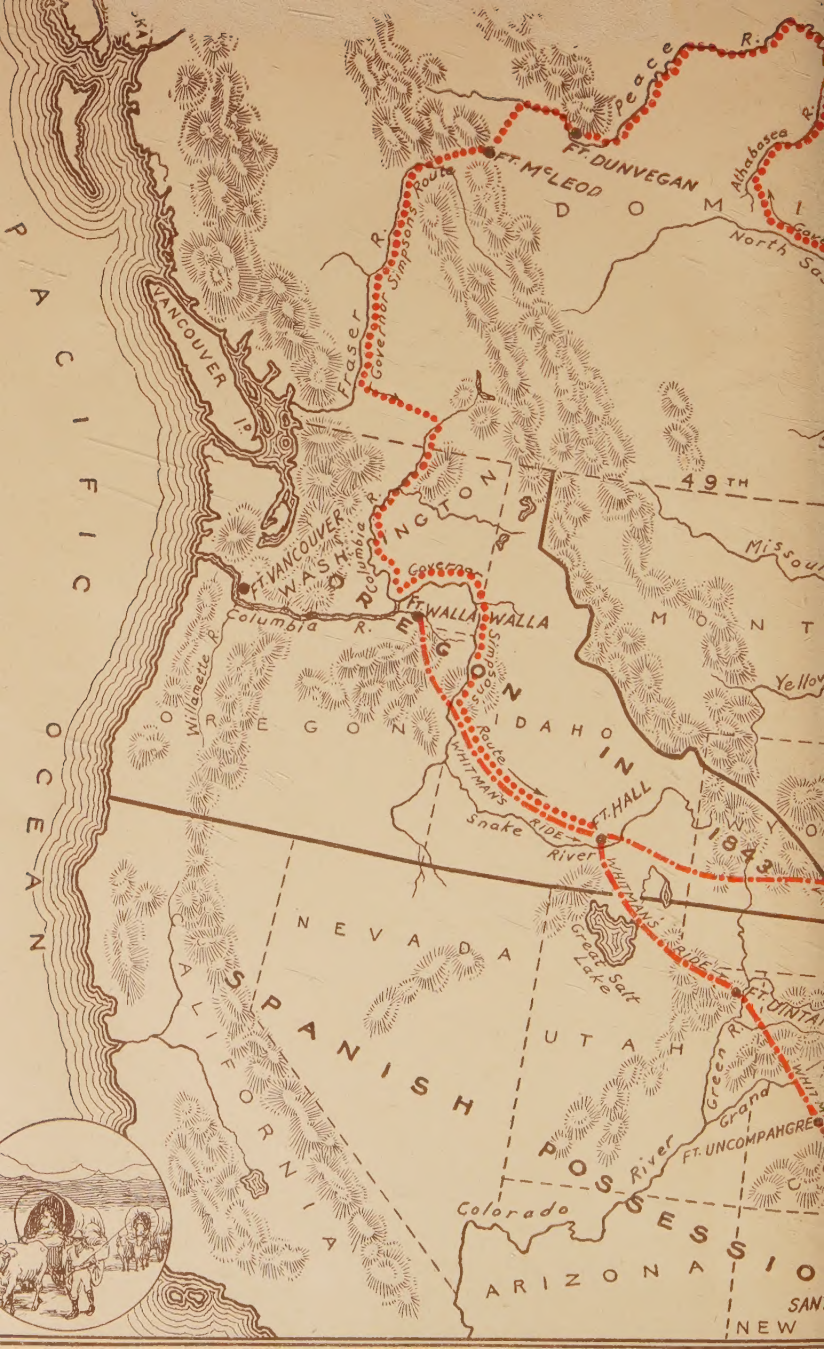
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